

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF LIN YUTANG'S
CULTURAL INTERNATIONALISM, 1928-1938

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Cultural internationalism is international relations guided by intercultural affairs rather than by interstate affairs. From the outset of modern international history, two models of cultural internationalism have emerged—symmetrical and asymmetrical. The asymmetrical model—the one-way import of cultural ideas—was reserved for the non-Western world. China under the Chiang Kai-shek regime naturally falls under the asymmetrical model. The symmetrical model—the reciprocal exchange of cultural ideas—was reserved for the intra-Western world.

My study shows how Lin Yutang, in 1935, defied the restrictions of the symmetrical model and implemented symmetrical cultural internationalism—reciprocal cultural exchange with the Western world—with incredible success.

My study also contributes a new analytical framework for cross-cultural studies by analyzing the ideology and methodology of Lin Yutang's framework from the perspective of cultural internationalism. Moreover, this study traces the origin of Lin's framework to one of the New Culture paradigms conceived by Hu Shi and Zhou Zuoren.

THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF LIN YUTANG'S CULTURAL
INTERNATIONALISM, 1928-1938

By

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my oldest sister, Maria Poon, a woman with a fiercely balanced mind, formidable substance, and flawless taste. Years ago, before I ever knew the term “cultural internationalism,” I posed to her the simple question—Why has China or the United States not been able to produce another Lin Yutang? She replied, “Lin Yutang was an incomparable cultural internationalist, who remains unsurpassed to this day.”

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Chapter One

Introduction

Cultural internationalism as defined by Akira Iriye is the fostering of international cooperation in the cultural sphere through cultural activities across national boundaries.

It “entails a variety of activities undertaken to link countries and people through the exchange of ideas and persons, through scholarly cooperation, or through efforts at facilitating cross-national understanding.”¹ The major contribution of his book, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, is his outlining of the history of internationalism as *intercultural* rather than *interstate* affairs. Iriye aims to conceptualize a new framework in the study of international relations that decenters the state and focuses on non-state actors such as thinkers, writers, artists, and musicians, etc.

However, near the end of his book, Iriye concedes that cultural internationalism in the 20th century was mainly an Americanization affair and “a sort of unicultural universalism,” which I term “asymmetrical cultural internationalism” for this study.² He also mentions that since the 1970s, a growing number of Third World leaders and

¹ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3.

² Ibid., 161.

scholars have demanded that it is time to move “away from unilateral cultural relations, or the dissemination and imposition of a unified value system with implied universal and absolute validity, toward reciprocal cultural relations.”³ In essence, Iriye implies that the Third World countries are protesting against the hypocrisy of asymmetrical cultural internationalism and are demanding symmetrical cultural internationalism, a reciprocal exchange of cultural ideas. At the end of his book, by urging the readers to develop a strategy for exchanges that were not “unidirectional,” Iriye implicitly champions the coming of the age of symmetrical cultural internationalism.⁴ Although Iriye was championing symmetrical cultural internationalism in 1997, this thesis is written to demonstrate that Lin Yutang, one Chinese intellectual, despite the pitiful international standing of Republican China (1912-1949), had already launched *symmetrical* cultural internationalism as early as the 1930s.

Lin Yutang, China’s most famous bilingual author, wrote a series of bestselling English books that promoted Chinese culture for 30 years, from 1935 to 1967, and became part of the New York elite intellectual circles. One of his books, *The Importance*

³ Ibid.,170.

⁴ Ibid.,175.

of Living, the number one bestselling non-fiction in the US in 1938, has been continuously in print and translated into more than a dozen foreign languages. At least five of his 29 English titles have been re-printed recently in the US, not to mention the continual reprinting of dozens of his Chinese titles in China since the 1980's.⁵ Not only did Lin export Chinese cultural knowledge to the US, but he also imported Western cultural knowledge to China. Before his emigration to the US in 1936, he founded several very successful Chinese magazines to promote Western literary humor and the familiar essay, which were unknown in modern Chinese literature, and was called the “Master of Humor” in China. He was truly China’s preeminent symmetrical cultural internationalist.

Despite much literature on Lin’s life, works, and literary ideals, his cultural internationalism has yet to be analyzed.⁶ Although Lin’s cross-cultural activities have

⁵ According to the web site of Amazon.com on February 15, 2009, the following five books in English have recently been republished: *My Country and My People*; *Between Tears and Laughter*; *The Gay Genius—The Life and Times of Su Tungpo*; *Chinatown Family*; *Lin Yutang on the Wisdom of America*.

⁶ The existing scholarship in English on Lin Yutang are: Steven Bradley Miles, “Independence and Orthodoxy: Lin Yutang and Chinese Journalism in the Republican Era, 1923-1936” (master’s thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1999). The other works written for the departments of language and literature are: Diran John Sohigian, “The Life and Times of Lin Yutang” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991); Joseph Clayton Sample, “Lin Yutang and the Revolution of Modern Chinese Humor” (master’s thesis, Texas A&M University, 1993); Jun Qian, “Lin Yutang: Negotiating Modernity Between East and West” (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1996); Shuang Shen, “Self, Nations, and the

been widely recognized and described, no scholars have systematically analyzed the nature, framework, process, or the historical context of his cultural internationalism.⁷

Thus far, only one thesis on Lin Yutang has been written for a history department. This thesis, written by Steven Miles at the University of Texas at Austin, focused on Lin Yutang's defense of his literary independence against literary totalitarianism imposed by both the rightists and the leftists when he lived in China. Mile's thesis does not cover Lin's literary endeavors targeted towards Western readership or address the topic of cultural internationalism.

Other theses and dissertations have been written for literature departments and focus primarily on Lin's life, identity, and modernity. Diran Sohigian wrote an important dissertation that provided an exhaustive account of Lin's lifetime activities in a chronological order. Joseph Sample's thesis is a survey of Lin's English columns written for *The China Critic* from 1928 to 1936. Jun Qian's dissertation explores Lin's personal

Diaspora—Re-reading Lin Yutang, Bai Xianyong, and Frank Chin” (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1998); Jue Wang, “Moment of Freedom from the Symbolized World—A Semiotic Study of Lin Yutang's Depiction of Women” (PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 2005).

⁷ I am referring to the American scholarship only. I have not reviewed the 433 theses and doctoral dissertations on Lin Yutang produced in China from 1994 to 2005. For a breakdown of the annual production figures, see Wang Zhaosheng 王兆胜, *Lin Yutang yu zhongguo wenhua* (林語堂與中國文化 Lin Yutang and Chinese Culture) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007), 355-6.

attitude and practices in constructing a Chinese modernity that transcends the East-West dichotomy but not on Lin's East-West cultural exchange. Shuang Shen's dissertation explores Lin's cross-cultural identity rather than Lin's cross-cultural exchange activities. Shen's study compares Lin's cross-cultural identity, which was shaped by semi-colonialism in Shanghai, with the cross-cultural identity of Chinese American immigrants. Jue Wang's dissertation is a semiotic study of Lin's depiction of women in his fiction.

My thesis contributes a new analytical framework for cross-cultural studies by analyzing the ideology and methodology of Lin's accomplishments from the perspective of cultural internationalism. In addition, this thesis contributes to a new understanding of the legacy of the New Culture Movement. This study shows that the theoretical origin and methodology of Lin Yutang's symmetrical cultural internationalism is grounded on one of the New Culture reform paradigms. Therefore, in order to reflect the intellectual origins of Lin Yutang's cultural internationalism in a Chinese historical context, it is equally important to outline the pre-existing cultural reform paradigms that were debated in China during his time. From there, we will realize that Lin was navigating against not only the tide of asymmetrical cultural internationalism but also the two domestic tidal waves of cultural nationalism and cultural iconoclasm.

Sensing the cultural trend of history, Lin consciously aligned himself with a unique paradigm that would inspire him to extract suitable cultural elements from both Chinese non-orthodox traditions and from Western modern traditions to launch his ultimately wildly successful symmetrical cultural internationalism. Thus, the genius of Lin Yutang lies not only in his exceptional linguistic and literary abilities, his formidable knowledge of the East and the West, his acute sensitivity to native and global cultural trends, but also in his ingenious linkage of Chinese and Western literary theories, genres, and styles. Moreover, Lin's unique framework, which keeps the indigenous cultural identity, managed to unravel the dichotomy between cultural nationalism and cultural internationalism. In fact, Lin's framework of symmetrical cultural internationalism could even serve as an inspiration to other nations who want to participate in the arena of symmetrical cultural internationalism.

Because the genius of Lin Yutang's symmetrical cultural internationalism is extremely complex, I have divided my thesis into five chapters. Chapter Two gives a brief description of the unique role that Lin Yutang played in cultural internationalism and an analysis of his uncommon profile. Chapter Three traces the origin of the theoretical framework of Lin's cultural internationalism to a paradigmatic legacy of the New Culture Movement. Chapter Four illustrates the process of how Lin, informed by

this paradigmatic legacy, singled out certain aspects of non-orthodox Chinese traditions to serve as links for his two-way cultural exchange—symmetrical cultural internationalism. The last chapter discusses intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the success of Lin's symmetrical cultural internationalism and his contributions to international mutual understanding.

Chapter Two

Lin Yutang's Cultural Internationalism and Biculturalism:

A Matter of Balance

I. Cultural Internationalism and Lin Yutang's Cultural Internationalism

When explaining the term “internationalism,” Akira Iriye admits that cooperation and interchange can certainly take place with diplomacy, military alliance, or security treaties. However, this type of internationalism aims to preserve the existing geopolitical character of a given world order. Cultural internationalism, however, is a different sort of internationalism that aspires to a more peaceful and stable world order through transnational efforts of cultural exchanges.⁸ What was unique about this movement was the “stress on cultural, intellectual, and psychological underpinnings of the international order; [and] that at bottom, peace and order must depend on a habit of mind on the part of individuals in all countries—a mindset that looked beyond security, legal, and even business issues and was willing to link national to world interests.”⁹ In support of his view, Iriye cites Mary Follett’s words: “The old-fashioned hero went out to conquer his

⁸ Iriye, 3.

⁹ Ibid., 60.

enemy; the modern hero goes out to disarm his enemy through creating a mutual understanding.”¹⁰

Although cultural internationalism is the ideal cultural movement, Iriye concludes that cultural internationalism in the 20th century remained largely either an intra-Western or an Americanization affair. Iriye explains that non-Western countries could not have easily participated in cultural internationalism in the early 20th century because the West had habitually linked culture to race.¹¹ The emphasis of cultural internationalism in those days was cultural exchange of “high” pursuits among the elite. Since non-Western countries were perceived to have no “high” culture because of their “inferior” race, they were excluded from participating in cultural exchanges for the most part.¹² In fact, there was indeed a growing movement among nations in Europe and North America at the time to encourage scholarly and artistic exchanges of “high” pursuits such as artistic creation, musical performance, scientific research, and the setting up of various international expositions.¹³ In essence, two models of cultural internationalism emerged because of

¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² Ibid., 4-5.

¹³ Ibid., 4-5.

this inherent unequal international cultural relationship: (1) Symmetrical cultural internationalism—the reciprocal exchange of cultural ideas—was reserved for the intra-Western world, and (2) asymmetrical cultural internationalism—the one-way import of cultural ideas—was reserved for the non-Western world. Because of the racial barrier and the perception that non-Western countries had no high culture, the practice of a reciprocal exchange of cultural ideas between Western and non-Western countries was largely non-existent prior to the early 20th century.

What is so unique about Lin Yutang's cultural internationalism is that it punctured the glass ceiling of the first model and defied the restrictions of the second model and cultivated cultural internationalism to its most ideal state—a reciprocal exchange of cultural ideas through importing foreign ideas and exporting indigenous ideas between a non-Western country and the West on an equal basis. Lin Yutang's historic contribution to cultural internationalism can be demonstrated by the absence, not the presence, of his name from the long list of Western-origin cultural internationalists whom Iriye cites in his book. The absence of Lin Yutang's name from the list is telling since Lin's curriculum vitae as an eminent cultural internationalist is indisputable as evidenced by the following biographical summary of his life and career, which will be discussed in the next section. I think the real reason for Iriye's oversight is even Iriye could not imagine

that an eminent cultural internationalist member could have come from a non-Western Third World country in the 1930s. In fact, Lin Yutang's lifetime contribution to cultural internationalism was acknowledged by *The New York Times* in 1976. The following is the beginning paragraph of a 1300-word obituary written and published by *The New York Times* on March 27, 1976:

Lin Yutang, 80, Dies: Scholar-Philosopher

Lin Yutang, poet, novelist, historian and philosopher, had no peer as an interpreter to Western minds of the customs, aspirations, fears and thoughts of his people and their country, China, the great and tragic land . . . Beginning with his book *My Country and My People* which, in 1935, burst like a shell over the Western world, to *Pagan to Christian*, published in 1960, he turned out work with regularity on scores of subjects. Western critics hailed, with rare dissent, his work and his "revelations" of what China "really is like." Few authors have enjoyed so nearly unanimous favorable reception . . .¹⁴

The obituary, one of the longest ever written by *The New York Times*, was written ten years after Lin Yutang's permanent departure from New York to Taiwan in 1966. The affectionate tone of the commemoration was attributed both to Lin's contributions and to his 30-year affiliation with the elite intellectual circles in New York.

II. Biculturality and Lin Yutang's Biculturality

¹⁴ "Lin Yutang, 80, Dies; Scholar, Philosopher: Lin Yutang, Scholar-Philosopher, Dies," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), March 27, 1976, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed March 17, 2009)

Lin Yutang (1895-1976) had a long, illustrious, and colorful life and career. He was born in 1895 to a Presbyterian minister in Banzi in the Fujian province of China. He entered St. John's University, a prestigious missionary school in Shanghai, in 1912 to study linguistics. Upon his graduation, Lin taught at Qinghua University in Beijing as an English instructor from 1916 to 1919. Awed by the ancient imperial city and shamed by his ignorance of Chinese culture, Lin secretly self-studied Chinese history, literature, and philosophy and soon renounced his Christian faith. Subsequently, Lin attended Harvard University in 1919 to study comparative literature under Bliss Perry and Irving Babbitt. He then traveled to Le Creusot, France to work for the YMCA for a year to teach basic literacy to the Chinese workers who had been brought to France during World War I. Afterwards, Lin went to Germany to attend Jena University before his transfer to Leipzig University, where he obtained a doctoral degree in Chinese philology and linguistics.

From 1923 to 1926, Lin was a professor of English literature and philology at Peking University and Peking Female Normal University while writing satirical essays for *Yusi* magazine to mock the Beijing warlord Zhang Zongzhang. After being placed on Zhang's death list of fifty-four "radical professors" along with Lu Xun, he fled Beijing for Xiamen in 1926. He worked at Xiamen University for a year as the Dean of the College of Arts before his first and only stint as a government bureaucrat. However, he

quit after six months as the English secretary to Foreign Minister Eugene Chen and as the managing editor of the *People's Tribune*, an English-language government organ for the Wuhan faction of Guomingdang headed by Wang Jingwei.

“Loving revolutions but hating revolutionaries,” Lin quit his government job, and in 1928, Lin was hired by Cai Yuanpei to work at the Academia Sinica in Shanghai as a foreign language editor and a research fellow in Chinese philology. In Shanghai, Lin gained his initial fame by writing a Chinese tragicomedy “Confucius Saw Nancy,” a humorous play that provoked a protest from the entire Confucius clan in Qufu, Shandong province.¹⁵ From 1928 to 1935, before his emigration to the U.S., Lin achieved a series of superlative successes in Shanghai. He invented an index system for the Chinese characters and aided in the formulation of a Romanization system of written Chinese. He contributed to an English column in *The China Critic Weekly* and became one of the few independent social and politic critics in China. He founded *The Analects Fortnightly*, the first Chinese humor magazine, and *This Human World*, the first Chinese magazine devoted to the familiar essay. Before he emigrated to the U.S. in 1936, Lin had

¹⁵ The Chinese play was subsequently translated into English by Lin Yutang. See *Confucius Saw Nancy and Essays about Nothing* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935)

already become the “Master of Humor” in China and the famous international author of *My Country and My People*, a bestselling non-fiction published in the US in 1935.

Lin Yutang, for the next thirty years, wrote twenty-eight other English fiction and non-fiction books, including *The Importance of Living*, the number one bestseller in the US in 1938. His works cover a wide range of genres—essay collections, novel, translation, biography, and textbooks. During World War II, he published over a dozen articles annually in the *New York Times* and in other major magazines to elicit American assistance to China and devoted much time to United China Relief. In spite of literary and financial success, Lin unfortunately spent his entire savings in inventing the first Chinese typewriter that subsequently proved to be too costly for the retail market in postwar China. Moved by the sermons of Dr. David Read of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Lin returned to his father’s faith and wrote his semi-biography *From Pagan to Christianity* in 1959. Desiring to retire in his homeland but realizing he would be unwelcome by the Communist regime, Lin moved to Taiwan in 1966 as his final home. In his final years, Lin completed the crowning achievement of his life, the *Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Usage*, published in 1973, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature for his novel, *Moment in Peking*, in 1975. On a visit to his

daughter, Lin died in Hong Kong at the age of 80 and was buried at his home in Yangmingshan, Taipei, Taiwan.

If one examines the above biographical description of Lin's life and career, one will notice not only Lin Yutang's practice of symmetrical cultural internationalism—importation of Western knowledge and exportation of Chinese knowledge, but also the ubiquitous biculturality throughout his entire life and career. Lin's biculturality is inseparable from Lin Yutang's cultural internationalism and that his cultural internationalism is first and foremost a result of his consistent practice of biculturality.

Although Lin Yutang did not set out consciously to be a symmetrical cultural internationalist, he did set out consciously to live a life of well-balanced biculturality.

Philip C. C. Huang defines biculturality as the simultaneous participation by one person in two different cultures.¹⁶ Huang further explains that a bilingual person is almost of necessity also a bicultural person because he or she at times must confront the very different cultural meanings and nuances of some so-called equivalent terms of the two

¹⁶ Philip C. C. Huang, "Biculturality in Modern China and in Chinese Studies," *Modern China* 26, no. 1 (January 2000): 4.

languages.¹⁷ Huang's explanation of the relationship between biculturality and

bilinguality is validated by Lin Yutang's life experiences and his remarks in 1959:

There was something in the character of the Chinese language, which invisibly but most emphatically changed one's mode of thought. The modes of thinking, the concepts, the images, the very sounds of words are so different between the English language and the Chinese. Speaking English, one thinks in English, and speaking in Chinese one thinks inevitably in Chinese. If I were to write two essays one morning on the same subject with the same ideas, one in English and the other in Chinese, the essays themselves would come out differently because the flow of thought, following different imagery and allusions and associations, would automatically lead into different avenues I wrote on my fortieth birthday a couplet to myself: "One mind seeks the learning of ancients and moderns: Two legs straddle the cultures of East and West." I had to interpret the Chinese conscience and intuitive perceptions in the more exact frame of [Western] logical thinking, and subject the propositions of Western thinking to the test of Chinese intuitive judgment.¹⁸

In his article, Huang concludes that biculturals and bilinguals by nature are intrinsically different from monoculturals or monolinguals. The biculturals have the potential to utilize their unique abilities in three aspects: (1) to access two different languages and cultural systems; (2) to serve as an interpreter between them; (3) to become a detached observer of both in order to create and to forge new conceptions and combinations from the two constituent entities. Although Lin was clearly bicultural and bilingual, he set himself apart from other biculturals by practicing not just sporadic biculturality but, as his

¹⁷ Huang, 4.

¹⁸ Lin Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1959), 58, 63.

biographical information demonstrates, by practicing continual and well-balanced biculturalism. But the most crucial factor that distinguished Lin from other biculturals is the third aspect of biculturalism that Huang described—the creative and active effort to forge new conceptions and combinations from the two constituent entities.¹⁹ I will discuss Lin’s creative forging endeavors in Chapter Four because the genius and methodology of his symmetrical cultural internationalism lie in his forging of new conceptions from Chinese and Western ideas. But for now, I will show how Lin’s practice of biculturalism is continual and well-balanced and therefore different from his other bicultural peers.

As Huang points out in his article, “Biculturalism in Modern China and in Chinese Studies,” Republican China had no lack of biculturals. When one reads the content of Lin’s biographical summary, one might be tempted to conclude that Lin’s achievement in cultural internationalism was attributed to his unique and privileged bilingual and bicultural experiences. Not quite. In reality, Lin Yutang’s academic background, although impressive, was not unusual compared to his peers at Peking National University and Qinghua University, where one could find at least over a dozen faculty members with similar or more impressive background than his. In fact, Lin’s social

¹⁹ Huang, 6-7.

origin could be considered inferior to his many peers. He, along with seven other siblings, grew up in a small village of an impoverished province in Southeastern China and was raised by a self-educated Christian peasant-pastor, who had to raise funds for his tuition to St. John's University. In addition, although Lin admitted having acquired his linguistic skills at St. John's, an all-English American-based university, he also stated that "as far as English is concerned, it seemed a school for compradors of the foreign firms in Shanghai." Thus, St. John's contributed only to his initial exposure to bilinguality and biculturality. Moreover, Lin's exposure to life in the United States prior to 1936 is considered negligible since he had to abort his study at Harvard after one year due to financial hardship. Even during his one-year stay at Harvard, he did nothing but attend classes and studied in the library. His master's degree, after making up three courses in Germany, was awarded by Harvard in absentia in February 1922 because of his exceptional academic performance. Thus, the question remains—what can Lin's achievement in cultural internationalism be attributed to? First, it can be attributed to his incredible bilinguality, which resulted less from his education and more from his innate genius and ferocious reading. His bilinguality became so exceptional to the point where he could produce professional expository, argumentative, and creative writings in both languages on a daily basis. Zhao Yiheng, Professor of Chinese Literature at the

University of London, once remarked, “It is neither possible to render Lin’s Chinese writings into English nor possible to render his English writings into Chinese because of his perfect command of both languages.”²⁰

However, Lin’s incredible bilinguality accounts for only part of his achievement. As his biographical summary demonstrates, it is Lin’s continual and well-balanced practice of biculturalism that contributes greatly to his achievement in cultural internationalism. Lin’s continual balancing act is evident when we examine the nature and locales of his intellectual pursuits: English college education in Shanghai, self-taught Chinese literature and philosophy while teaching English in Qinghua University, Chinese philology major in Germany and professor of English philology at Peking University, English editor and Chinese philology research fellow at Academia Sinica in Shanghai, Chinese columnist for Chinese humorous magazines while an English columnist for *The China Critic* in Shanghai. Lin Yutang’s extensive and balanced practice of biculturalism, which demands tremendous linguistic talent and sensitivity to culture, is unsurpassed among his bicultural peers. It is no wonder that he gravitated toward two particular biculturalists with “first-class minds” as his intellectual mentors.

²⁰ Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡, “Lin Yutang yu Nuobeier jiang,” (林語堂與諾貝爾獎 Lin Yutang and the Nobel Prize) *Zhongguo wenhua bao* (中國文化報 *China Culture Daily*), October 31, 2000.

III. Lin Yutang's Two Bicultural Intellectual Mentors

When Lin Yutang reflected on his life at the age of 64 in his English book titled

From Pagan to Christian, he states:

There were two first-class minds which left an indelible influence upon me and which, in different ways, contributed to my further development: one was Dr. Hu Shih, whose name spells the Chinese Literary Renaissance of 1917 Hu Shih returned with national acclaim to join Peking University, and I was at Tsinghua [Qinghua University] to greet him. It was an electrifying experience All in all, the Literary Renaissance was a liberating force Chen Tu-shiu [Chen Duxiu] the Communist continued to damn the whole Confucian system in general and the Confucian worship of chastity and widowhood in particular, while Hu Shih, a typical rationalist, grounded in the scientific method of research, was actually more moderate and wrote like a scholar. . . .²¹

As we can see, Lin's assessment of the Literary Revolution was still positive even after forty years of the event. His admiration for Hu Shi (1891-1962) stems from his respect for Hu Shi's cultural and literary ideologies and scholarship. Lin did not flaunt Hu Shi's biculturality probably because he did not want his affinity with Hu Shi to be construed as camaraderie of the American returned students. Hu Shi's life-long eminent status as a Sinophone historian of traditional Chinese history, philosophy, and literature is indisputable. Hu Shi's Anglophone credentials were not unimpressive. Up until 1914, Hu Shi was the only Chinese student who had ever won first prize in English at Cornell

²¹ Lin, 44-5.

University.²² In 1916, Mei Guangdi, one of the future founders of *Xueheng* (*The Critical Review*), recommended that Hu Shi, who was by then attending Columbia University, be appointed the spokesman for the China's republican cause in America because "Hu Shi, being equally fluent in Chinese and English, is the only person among Chinese students in America who can use his pen to turn around the public opinion of this country."²³ Again, between 1937 and 1941, as Chinese ambassador to the U.S., his incessant anti-Japanese English articles and unceasing nationwide speaking tours drew vehement protests from the Japanese government. His award of 35 honorary doctoral degrees from the most prestigious U.S. universities could not be unrelated to his biculturality. Although Chou Chih-P'ing managed to retrieve only 203 of Hu Shi's English articles and speeches between 1912 and 1961, the quantity of Hu's English essays can rival that of Lin Yutang.²⁴

²² Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 40.

²³ Yu Ying-shih, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment: A Historian's Reflections on the May Fourth Movement," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Oldrich Kral (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 316.

²⁴ Hu Shih. *Hu Shi yingwen wencun* (胡適英文文存 A Collection of Hu Shih's English Writings). Compiled by Chih-P'ing Chou 周質平. 3 vols. Taipei: Yuanliu chuban, 1995. Hu Shih. *Hu Shi weikan yingwen yigao* (胡適未刊英文遺稿 A Collection of Hu Shih's Unpublished English Essays). Compiled by Chih-P'ing Chou 周質平. Taipei: Lianjing chuban, 2001.

Ironically, Lin Yutang's other "first-class mind" mentor was an ultraconservative queue-wearing Qing royalist-Confucian who had nothing but contempt for the Literary Revolution (perhaps even for Hu Shi). Gu Hongming (1857-1928) was born and raised in the British Straits Settlements in Penang and attended boarding school in Great Britain at ten. He received his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Edinburgh in literature and studied civil engineering in Berlin. From 1885 to 1905, Gu was the personal secretary-interpreter of Viceroy Zhang Zhidong, who was one of the most powerful Qing reformer-officials in late 19th century China and the mentor of Gu's education in the Confucian classics. Gu taught English classics from 1917 to 1919 at Peking University. Although Lin saw Gu in Peking, Lin, at the tender age of 23, did not feel equal to approaching this expert on Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle, Emerson, Heine, Goethe, and Schiller, even though Lin had devoured all of Gu's English writings while he was at St. John's.²⁵ When Lin later was studying in Germany in the early 1920s, Lin discovered that Gu's English book, *The Spirit of the Chinese Civilization*, was well known among cultured circles in

²⁵ Lin, 49-50.

Germany, even though Gu was totally unknown in the U.S.²⁶ For his admiration of Gu's

biculturalism, Lin writes:

He was a crank but not a bore, for his was a first-class mind and he had, above all, insight and depth, as no man in my generation had. No man in China wrote English the way he did, because of his challenging ideas and because of his masterly style, a style reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's poised and orderly evolution of ideas and repetition of certain phrases, plus the dramatic bombast of Thomas Carlyle and the witticisms of Heine He acted, in fact, as the galvanizer of ideas Eastern and Western. His *Discourses and Sayings of Confucius* was studded with illuminating remarks from Goethe, Schiller, Ruskin, and Joubert Ku Hung-ming's translations will forever stand, for they have that happy matching of sense and expression that can come only through the mastery of both languages and understanding of their deeper meanings.²⁷

As we will see later, Hu Shi most likely influenced Lin Yutang's future orientation toward indigenous Chinese cultural pluralism while Gu Hongming was the one who fired Lin's aspiration for cultural internationalism in content, style, and tone. Furthermore, Lin asserted that Gu's writings were the origin of his calling to explore Chinese history and heritage because "no Chinese could, if he was of a searching mind, remain long satisfied with a half-knowledge of the Chinese intellectual landscape."²⁸ In addition, Gu's "strong wine" also served as a literary model for an aspiring independent-minded cultural

²⁶ Ibid., 50.

²⁷ Ibid., 46, 50, 52.

²⁸ Ibid., 58.

critic. The following passage from one of Gu's book was the "strong wine" that sent Lin off on his soul-searching trip to explore the essence of Chinese and Western culture:

The true Christian is one who is a Christian because "it is his nature to be so," because he loves holiness and all that is lovable in Christianity That is the true Christian. The sneak Christian is one who wants to be a Christian because he is afraid of hell-fire. The cad Christian is one who wants to be a Christian because he wishes to go to Heaven to drink tea and sing hymns with the angels. Now, the true Jesuit is one who does not very much believe in Heaven, angels or hell-fire, but he wants other people to believe in these things—to be a Christian for his benefit! That is the Jesuit.²⁹

For the rest of his life, Lin made a conscious effort to differentiate between Jesus Christ, Christians, and Christianity and between Confucius, Confucians, and Confucianism: with some, Lin had a strong affinity; for some, Lin had a strong revulsion. Because Gu opened his eyes to see beauties and evils in each civilization, his affinity with both Chinese and Western cultures was sincere and enduring, and he confronted both cultures as equals. Although his biculturality had predisposed him to cultural internationalism, it was the combination of his well-balanced bicultuality and his enduring love for Chinese and Western cultures that enabled him to be an eminent symmetrical cultural internationalist. However, before he could fulfill his destiny as a cultural internationalist, he had to be discovered by Pearl Buck, who became his publisher.

²⁹ Ibid., 56.

IV. Lin Yutang's bilinguality

Before Lin Yutang made himself known to the world by writing *My Country and My People*, which according to both Ha Jin and Pearl Buck is “the truest, the most profound, the most complete, the most important book about China,” Lin had to find his way to reveal his linguistic genius to the world.³⁰ Although bilinguality is usually not a prerequisite to exporting literary productions because one can always utilize a translator for cultural exchange, *My Country and My People* is a different matter. Pearl Buck (1892-1973), author of *The Good Earth* that won her a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 and a Nobel Prize in 1938, married Richard Walsh, President of John Day Company, a U.S. publisher, in 1935. Buck, who was probably acting as a co-publisher because of her liaison with Walsh, had some very specific guidelines for an author she would like to publish. In her introduction to *My Country and My People*, Buck claimed that she had been searching for a long time for a suitable author but had failed because all the potential candidates wrote defensively about China in a bombastic manner.³¹ She was specifically looking for “a modern English-writing Chinese who was not so detached from his own people as to be

³⁰ Ha Jin, *The Writer as Migrant* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 15.

³¹ Pearl S. Buck, introduction to *My Country and My People*, by Lin Yutang (New York: The John Day Company, Inc., 1935), xi.

alien to them, and yet detached enough to comprehend them” and could write truthfully and humorously at the same.³²

In essence, she was looking to commission a bicultural author to do the job because only a true bicultural, as Philip Huang said, can maintain the balanced distance and objectivity toward one’s own culture. In addition to her prescription of the subject matter and content, Buck was also prescribing a humorous writing style. Hers was almost an impossible demand because China at the time had yet to develop a relaxed, let alone humorous, tradition for modern expository composition. Furthermore, the idea of a non-native English writer writing an English book in a humorous manner was even more forbidding. Ha Jin, Professor of English Literature at Boston University and a prizewinning author, in his defense of Nabokov’s humorous literary expressions, cautions that quite a few prominent literature experts believe that “linguistic playfulness is impossible to accomplish for an exiled writer (or for a non-native) who chooses to write in another language partly because he speaks to an audience in his adopted country who have different cultural and linguistic references and cannot fully understand him.”³³

³² Ibid., xii.

³³ Ha, 49.

Since, as Ha Jin suggests, it is not common to find a bilingual author who can express literary humor in two different cultural and linguistic references, Lin Yutang was the only author who fulfilled Pearl Buck's requirements at the time. Fortunately, Shanghai, where Lin wrote *My Country and My People*, provided a bicultural environment in which his cultural internationalism could thrive.

Shanghai, a semi-colony occupied by the British, American, French, and Japanese, was a city where biculturals could stand apart from several cultures and think about each from the perspective of the other. Shanghai, despite an occasional sign saying "No Chinese or Dogs" at the Bund Park gate, was not a segregated city by race. Chinese and foreigners did live in mixed company (華洋雜處 *huayang zachu*) in the settlements of the respective colonists even though they led essentially separate lives.³⁴ According to Leo Lee, Shanghai was the cosmopolitan city *par excellence* in the 1930s, and it replaced Tokyo (damaged by an earthquake in 1923) as the central hub to all other cities.³⁵

Being in a semi-colony, Lin could have easily observed colonial dominance as well as the modes of living of Western (and Japanese) colonists and have partaken of

³⁴ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

their urban and print cultures. In addition, there were many Chinese-language and English-language magazines for biculturals to express their thoughts in bilingual formats. Before he became the “Master of Humor” by founding *The Analects Fortnightly* (論語 Lunyu) to introduce literary humor into China in 1932, Lin contributed to two Chinese-language magazines, *Benliu* and *Yusi*, and the English-language magazine *The China Critic: The Only Chinese Owned and Edited English Weekly*. The mission of *The China Critic* was to achieve international mutual understanding by bringing together “the twain of the East and the West.” Lin was given his own special humor column called “The Little Critic” to establish his reputation as an independent cultural and political critic of China and the West.

The Little Critic, being quite influential among foreigners and Chinese intellectuals living in China, was naturally an excellent vehicle for Lin to exercise symmetrical cultural exchange, albeit on a local scale. Moreover, *The Little Critic* was also an excellent vehicle for Lin to voice his nationalistic sentiments. The co-existence of cultural internationalist and political nationalist sentiments of a Chinese nationalist in a semi-colonial locality might seem to be a contradiction at first glance. However, Shumei Shih summarizes the unique characteristics of a semi-colony vis-à-vis a formal colony as follows:

Like neocolonialism, semicolonialism chiefly operated through economic and cultural imperialisms and not territorial occupation. The political structure of formal colonialism which ruled by fear and force in India, tolerating less ambiguity and ambivalence, made the colonial state a ready target of cultural articulations of resistance This is why in India one finds sustained critiques of Western modernity from both antimodern and nonmodern positions The less the perceived threat, whether illusory or not, the less they needed a nativist aesthetics, and the more open a cultural attitude they could have to the West.”³⁶

Shih’s explanation illuminates why compartmentalization of cultural internationalism and political nationalism of the Chinese nationalists in Shanghai was possible. The reason is that the absence of formal colonialism in China naturally led the Chinese people to be less guarded against cultural imperialism. Echoing Shih’s argument, Leo Lee claims that colonial dominance in Shanghai was perceived by cultural and literary producers only as an economic affair. Because of this perception, Leo Lee asserts that Chinese writers did not fear losing their identity as Chinese nationalists and therefore freely adopted Western ideas for their own quest of modernity. He finds that the image of a ruthless Western colonial master was almost non-existent in the literary texts of the Chinese writers in Shanghai during that period.³⁷

Lin Yutang, like most of his literary peers whom Leo Lee described, was indeed able to compartmentalize cultural internationalism and political nationalism. However,

³⁶ Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 372-3.

³⁷ Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 308-12.

unlike most of his literary peers, Lin simply could not tolerate blatant colonial diplomatic dominance. Lin, being a balanced independent critic, was equally critical of Western imperialism and domestic vices. Because of the imposed Nationalist censorship and potential death threats, Lin tended to employ measured sarcasm in his satirical essays when attacking the Nationalists. But when Lin delivered a topic pertaining to Western imperialism, his satirical attacks were always devastating. For example, when Lin indicted American extraterritoriality in China, his nine-page essay titled “An Open Letter to An American Friend” was totally merciless. He ridiculed the supposedly courageous Christians for requiring the protection of extraterritoriality in China. He ironically questions why the Americans were so intent on maintaining extraterritoriality in China when they had no such practices with Poland, Romania, or Russia. He derides the Americans by asking why several thousand Germans could stay out of Chinese prisons and live peacefully in Shanghai without the protection of extraterritoriality. He then mocks the Americans for their preference of exercising extraterritoriality rather than exercising civility by saying “pardon me,” “see you again,” and “good morning” to the Chinese.³⁸

³⁸ Lin Yutang, *The Little Critic: Essays, Satire and Sketches on China (First Series: 1930-1932)* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935), 124-132.

Ironically, Lin's merciless indictment of Western imperialism did not hurt his popularity with Western readership in China. In fact, Pearl Buck, being totally won over by Lin's fearlessness, urged him to write *My Country and My People*, which began his launching of cultural internationalism worldwide.³⁹ In 1935, Lin indeed wrote *My Country and My People*, a balanced, comprehensive, and critical portrayal of China and the Chinese people. Having gone through seven editions in four months and translated into numerous languages, the book made Lin the first Chinese author to reach the top of the *New York Times* bestselling list. However, it was his next book, *The Importance of Living*, that won him the number one bestselling spot in the US for the year of 1938. *The Importance of Living*, a precursor to modern "self-help" books filled with witty and practical Chinese and Western philosophical observations, cemented Lin's position as a famous international author. Armed with these two bestsellers, Lin Yutang became a de facto Chinese cultural ambassador to the US while one of his bicultural mentors, Hu Shi, was the official Chinese ambassador to the US during World War II.

³⁹ Pearl S. Buck, introduction to *With Love and Irony*, by Lin Yutang (New York: The John Day Company, 1940), ix-x.

Chapter Three

Three Theoretical Options for Lin Yutang's Cultural Internationalism:

A Matter of Substance

I. Prologue: Three Chinese Cultural Response Paradigms to Asymmetrical Cultural Internationalism

Unlike the situation in pre-modern China, where the term asymmetrical cultural internationalism denotes the predominately one-way exportation of Chinese culture to the tributary states along China's periphery, in modern China, asymmetrical cultural internationalism in modern China denotes the one-way importation of Western culture. This one-way importation of Western culture is a typical phenomenon in most non-Western countries during the so-called Western century in which Western techniques, institutions and values were imposed on colonial people.

China, however, is unlike most non-Western countries since Western ideas were not imposed on the Chinese for the fact that China proper has never been a Western colony. Nonetheless, Chinese officials and intellectuals did make a conscious effort to embrace different aspects of Western learning for the sake of modernization, which they perceived as a universal phenomenon that all people sooner or later must undergo in order to survive in the modern world. This type of self-imposed selective cultural

Westernization arose because modern technologies, institutions, political ideologies, and values are all Western in origin in spite of their many competing versions. Because selective cultural Westernization is a unique Chinese historical phenomenon, the asymmetrical and humiliating nature of the cultural exchange logically propelled passionate and diverse responses from Chinese officials and intellectuals.

This chapter describes the three major cultural paradigms that emerged in response to asymmetrical cultural internationalism and Lin Yutang's reaction to these paradigms. The first paradigm centers on Confucianism—the orthodox Chinese tradition; the second centers exclusively on Western culture; and the third, cultural reconstructionism, aims to connect either the orthodox or non-orthodox elements of Chinese culture with Western models to reconstruct Chinese culture. It is important to note that in China and before World War II, modernization was valued more than two-way cultural exchange and therefore symmetrical cultural internationalism had not been frequently practiced until Lin Yutang implemented it in the 1930s. Because Lin's conscious practice of well-balanced biculturality was inspired by genuine affection for both Chinese and Western cultures, he was naturally predisposed to follow a framework that composed substantive bicultural contents. Since the first two paradigms refuse a genuine cultural exchange of substance, it is only logical that the third paradigm—the one

that aims to reconstruct Chinese culture with Western ideas—was Lin Yutang’s inspiration to derive his cultural exchange model—symmetrical cultural internationalism.

II. Paradigm One: *Ti-yongism*—Asymmetrical Cultural Internationalism without Western Substance

From 1865 to 1949, the eras between the Tongzhi Restoration and the inception of the People’s Republic of China, three dominant cultural reform paradigms—*ti-yongism*, totalistic iconoclasm, and cultural reconstructionism—emerged to reflect the various degrees of resistance to cultural Westernization. Regardless of its efficacy, the *ti-yong* (體用 substance-function) paradigm was most favored by both the Qing and the Nationalist party-state (Guomingdang) only because Confucianism is the centerpiece of the paradigm. The *ti-yong* formulation is composed of two Chinese words—*ti*, meaning “substance,” and *yong*, meaning “function.”⁴⁰ The idea was that Confucian learning would remain the underlying substance of Chinese civilization while Western learning would serve a subordinate function for China’s technological development so that existing Confucian socio-political and cultural-moral structures could remain in tact.

⁴⁰ I have adopted the English translation of *ti-yong* provided by Hellmut Wilhelm and Joseph R. Levenson, two earliest Western scholars who expounded on the formulation. On the origin and significance of the formulation, see Hellmut Wilhelm, “The Problem of Within and Without, a Confucian Attempt in Syncretism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 1 (January 1951): 48-60.

Qing's *ti-yong* formulation was clearly a form of asymmetrical cultural internationalism in terms of its one-way importation: China imports but the West does not. In addition, since Western "substance" was excluded from the imported package of Western learning, the *ti-yong* formula was evidently designed to resist the essence of cultural Westernization. Therefore, *ti-yongism*, a paradigm without any Western substance, was conceived with the purpose of grafting modernization onto cultural nationalism. Since the element of a genuine desire for cultural understanding of the West was thoroughly absent, the *ti-yong* paradigm was never intended to find common ground between two cultures; thus, it could not pave the way for symmetrical cultural internationalism. In the end, the half-hearted *ti-yong* reform framework could neither modernize China nor prevent Western cultural penetration.

II-1 Origin of *Ti-yongism*: Qing's Self-strengthening Movement

Although most people have attributed the origin of the *ti-yong* formulation to Zhang Zhidong's *Exhortation to Learn* (勸學篇 *Quan Xue Pian*) written in 1898, earlier Qing reformer Feng Guifeng had already developed the formula in 1861 for Qing's self-strengthening reform program.⁴¹ However, Feng defined Western learning as merely

⁴¹ Yu Ying-shih 余英時, *Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi shang de Hu Shi* (中國近代思想史上的胡適 Hu Shi in Modern Chinese Intellectual History) (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1984), 11.

Western technology while Zhang had come to accept that Western learning should include Western administration, which he opined was even more important than Western technology.⁴² Therefore, by 1898, Zhang stretched Western learning to include “education, geography, budgeting, taxes, military preparations, laws and regulations, industry and commerce, mathematics, drawing, mining, medicine, acoustics, optics, chemistry, and electricity.”⁴³ Based on the expansion of the definition of Western learning, one can sense that by the eve of the twentieth century, Chinese “substance” was fast eroding and was about to be overwhelmed by Western “functions” at anytime.

Joseph Levenson explains the naivety of Zhang’s rationalization of the *ti-yong* formula in the following manner:

Soon the list of the indispensable superior techniques [function] lengthened . . . , and essential traditional attitudes were almost casually dissipated by seekers and after the useful techniques which were to shield the Chinese essence [substance]. Feng Guifeng was ready to trade the *juren* and *jinshi* literary degrees for artisanship at least equal to the foreign.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 12.

⁴³ Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Chester Tan, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 86-87.

⁴⁴ Joseph R. Levenson, *Modern China and Its Confucian Past: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (1958; repr., Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964), 84-5.

Furthermore, Levenson points out that the fallacious assumption of *ti-yong* overlooked the fact that western ideas accepted as *yong* [function] were not tame, nor dead, but dynamic. He explains, “The process of knowledge is not a process of mere accretion. To speak of ‘adding to knowledge’ is misleading. For a gain in knowledge is always the transformation and the recreation of an entire world of ideas. It is the creation of a new world by transforming a given world . . .”⁴⁵ Now, it is just as possible that Qing reformers had an enormous faith in Confucianism and therefore assumed that Confucianism would be the ultimate transformer rather than the transformed. Such was not the outcome in the nineteenth century.

The futility of the three-decade-long Qing self-strengthening reform based on the *ti-yong* formula was exposed by the spectacular defeat of China during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. One decade after, the Qing was indeed overthrown by revolutionaries who deemed Qing corruption and outmoded Confucian socio-political structure to be major impediments to China’s modernization and survival.

Some scholars have asserted that the self-strengthening reform movement failed because of the incompetent Confucian monarchy and bureaucrats rather than Confucian anachronism in the modern world. They believe that the reform effort was doomed

⁴⁵ Ibid., 88.

because Qing's loose central government was unable to lead and coordinate the movement. In addition, the Qing also lacked the fiscal means, the political will, and the technically competent Confucian bureaucrats to oversee the movement.⁴⁶ Mary Wright, on the other hand, declares categorically "that the obstacles to [Qing's] successful adaptation to the modern world were not imperialist aggression, Manchu rule, Mandarin stupidity, or the accidents of history, but nothing less than the constituent elements of the Confucian system itself" because "a Confucian society is of necessity an agrarian society: trade, industry, economic development in any form, are its enemies."⁴⁷ Judging from the history after the collapse of the Qing, Wright was probably correct in her assessment. No other former East Asian Confucian countries, however enchanted by the concepts of "Confucian capitalism" or "the Confucian century," have attempted to resurrect the Confucian socio-political structure after the two failed attempts instigated by Yuan Shikai in 1915 and Kang Youwei in 1917.

II-2 *Ti-yongism* and the Nationalist Party

⁴⁶ Ranbir Vohra, *China's Path to Modernization*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 2000), 76.

⁴⁷ Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 9-10.

Although the Confucian *socio-political* structure was extinct by 1928, that did not stop the Nationalist Party (Guomingdang) from trying to resurrect the *cultural-moral* structure of Confucianism as the new Chinese *ti* (substance) while still keeping Western technology as *yong* (function). The four ancient Confucian moral principles—*li* (禮 propriety), *yi* (義 righteousness), *lian* (廉 integrity), and *chi* (恥 sense of shame)—were to serve as pillars of the Confucian cultural-moral structure and were to be carried out via the New Life Movement, inaugurated by Chiang Kai-shek on February 19, 1934.⁴⁸ Just as Sun Yat-sen had employed the Western concept of nationalism as an instrument to fashion a modern Chinese identity, Chiang also employed nationalism as an instrument to implement his Confucian cultural-moral order.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Chiang employed German totalitarianism and Italian fascism as additional instruments to carry out the implementation of a Confucian cultural-moral order. Again, like his Qing predecessors, Chiang probably did not worry about the transformative power of these Western-origin

⁴⁸ Arif Dirlik, “The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (August 1975): 945, 956.

⁴⁹ John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 105-6.

instruments because of his enormous faith in the Confucian cultural-moral substance, which had a precedent of incorporating Buddhism into Neo-Confucianism.

Mary Wright traces the process by which the Nationalist Party strove to revive Confucianism as follows: resumption of public veneration of Confucius in 1928, declaration of his birthday a national holiday in 1931, and promulgation of his recanonization together with the institution of the New Life Movement in 1934.⁵⁰ The intensive campaign to revive the Confucian ideology took many forms: the works of Zeng Guofan—the epitome Qing Confucian scholar-official who had rescued the Confucian civilization by suppressing the Taiping Rebellion—was assigned for study in the schools; Confucian ceremonies were publicized; and “the Read the Classics” movement was ordered by the government in some cities.⁵¹

According to Chiang Kai-shek, the revival of Confucian morality is the key to save China from its current plight. His rationale was that foreigners are superior to the Chinese because they have been practicing the four Confucian virtues—*li, yi, lian, chi*—all along unknowingly while the Chinese, by neglecting their native moral principles,

⁵⁰ Wright, 304.

⁵¹ Ibid., 310.

have caused the material and spiritual degeneration of their nation.⁵² Chiang insists that people must first be virtuous before they have the moral strength to obtain food and clothing.⁵³ The Movement utilized the passage in the *Great Learning*—one of the “Four Books” from the Confucian cannon—to explain how reform of individual morality would ultimately lead to a peaceful world and thus eliminate the need to reform the socio-political structure.⁵⁴ Like their self-strengthening Confucian predecessors, New Life ideologues also disparaged the modern humanities and social sciences and asserted that only science and technology needed to be imported from the West while Chinese studies would remain as the basis.⁵⁵

When the critics charged that the Movement was a restoration using Zhang Zhidong’s *ti-yong* formula, New Life writers were certainly correct in asserting that the Movement was not to restore the old society but its underlying virtues.⁵⁶ Arif Dirlik also

⁵² Dirlik, 956, 960.

⁵³ Wright, 308.

⁵⁴ Dirlik, 970, 977.

⁵⁵ Wright, 310; Dirlik, 961.

⁵⁶ Dirlik, 961.

agrees that even the most conservative New Life writers, for the sake of modernization, did not advocate a return to the Confucian social and political structure or to the bureaucratic monarchy.⁵⁷ More importantly, Dirlik adds that New Life ideology also rejected the idea of Confucian social-political order as an immutable and natural order.⁵⁸

I fully agree that the New Life Movement was not designed to be an institutional support of the old *ti-yong* framework that aimed to preserve both the Confucian socio-political and cultural-moral structure in tact. However, because the Nationalists had asserted that moral reform was just as important if not more important than socio-political reform, I would argue that the Movement was the Nationalists' attempt to institutionalize some aspects of the former Confucian cultural-moral structure as the new and abridged Chinese *ti* (substance) while still keeping Western technology as *yong* (function).

I believe the Nationalists' action is substantiated by Lin Yu-sheng's theory about the fate of Confucian cultural-moral order after the collapse of the Qing. Lin argues that those who wanted to defend traditional values in the post-Qing era must look for new justifications because universal kingship had been the "link that held the [Confucian] socio-political order and the cultural-moral order in a highly integrated fashion and that

⁵⁷ Ibid., 962-63.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 971.

the breakdown of socio-political order as a result of the collapse of the universal kingship inevitably undermined the cultural-moral order.”⁵⁹ In other words, the intrinsic values of Confucian cultural-moral order have never been independently theorized and their acceptance has always been justified by the presuppositions of universal kingship and a mythical cosmology; consequently, no thinker has yet to produce a viable hermeneutic model to substantiate an independent Confucian cultural-moral order.⁶⁰ Thus, the framework for reviving the Confucian cultural-moral order after the collapse of the Qing has been a veneer Confucianism without much theoretical substance and thus has become disguised under modern labels such as the New Life Movement. This must have led

⁵⁹ Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in May Fourth Era* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 17.

⁶⁰ John Makeham asserts that “although *ruxue*- (Confucian-studies-) centered Chinese cultural nationalism is a movement, it is a movement largely restricted to academics. Indeed, the movement is dominated by one particular section of that profession: academics employed in philosophy departments in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the mainland. Although it would be inaccurate to describe the movement as ‘nascent’—given its historical depth and geographical spread—it has yet to attract significant levels of support from those intellectuals who might transform the ideals formulated by these academic cultural nationalists into concrete forms of social or political mobilization. The most visible expression of the movement remains a body of discourse.” See John Makeham, *Lost Soul: “Confucianism” in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008) 16-17, 344-350.

Mary Wright to conclude that Confucian doctrines of the Nationalist Party tended to be on an “*ad hoc* basis” and are “confused and scarcely worth discussion.”⁶¹

Lin Yutang was repulsed by the idea of a resurrected Confucian cultural-moral order that had so recently been associated with cannibalism by the New Culturalists. Moreover, Lin was livid when he realized that Confucian moral reform would supplant the possibility of new reforms, such as a social reform that improves people’s livelihood, a political reform that stamps out rampant public corruption, or a constitutional reform that gives people legal protection for freedom of speech.⁶² Appalled by the Confucian restoration attempt, Lin Yutang remarks:

They should see that we have been talking moral platitudes continuously for the last two thousand years without improving the country morally or giving it a cleaner and better government. They should see that, if moralizations would do any good, China would be a paradise of saints and angels today It is a queer irony of fate that the good old schoolteacher Confucius should ever be called a political thinker, and that his moral molly-coddle stuff should ever be honored with the name of a “political” theory And any thinking student of Chinese history should have observed that the Chinese government a la Confucius with its tremendous moralizing has always been one of the most corrupt the world has ever seen . . .⁶³

⁶¹ Wright, 306.

⁶² Lin, *My Country and My People*, 206-213.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 207, 212.

In 1935, Lin Yutang, together with many leftists, signed a joint statement titled “Our Opinion Toward the Cultural Movement” that openly denounced the New Life Movement launched by the Nationalist government.⁶⁴

Regardless of the validity of the New Life Movement’s ideology and its method of execution, I believe the Nationalists’ effort to promote Confucian values was in line with Eric Hobsbawn’s theory that new nation-states have the tendency to “invent a tradition” for a nation of people who have no concept of national identity in order to facilitate national solidarity. Also, Chiang Kai-shek’s education in Zhejiang and military education in Japan probably predisposed him to cultural nationalism and rendered him immune both to genuine cultural internationalism and to the kind of totalistic iconoclasm that some of the New Culture intellectuals championed.

III. Paradigm Two—Totalistic Iconoclasm: Asymmetrical Cultural Internationalism without Chinese Substance

Before the Nationalist Party nominally took charge of China in 1927, two other cultural reform paradigms that were disposed to importing Western learning *in toto* (substance and function) were greatly debated during the New Culture Movement from 1915 to 1927. The New Culture Movement subsequently split into two factions and

⁶⁴ Qian, “Lin Yutang: “Negotiating Modernity,” 30.

produced two separate paradigms. One paradigm advocated for totalistic Westernism—the replacement of Chinese culture with Western culture—which later evolved into totalistic Marxism—the replacement of Chinese culture with Marxian ideology. I call this Westernism-turned-Marxism faction the second paradigm—totalistic iconoclasm—because it was the mainstream paradigm championed by leftist intellectuals. I call the other faction the third paradigm because it advocated for the importation of Western learning *in toto* for the reconstruction of Chinese culture rather than for the replacement of Chinese culture. This third paradigm will be discussed in Section Four of this chapter. While the first paradigm precludes a dialogue with the substantive component of Western culture, the second paradigm excludes Chinese culture completely. Consequently, the extreme asymmetrical nature of the second paradigm could hardly provide Lin Yutang the inspiration to fashion any sort of symmetrical cultural internationalism.

III-1 Totalistic Westernism

The totalistic Westernism phase of the second paradigm—totalistic iconoclasm—originated in the New Culture Movement, which was inaugurated by the founding of the *Youth* magazine (later renamed *New Youth*) in 1915 by Chen Duxiu. The magazine's mission was to emancipate Chinese youth from the Confucian ethic of self-subservience

by replacing Confucianism with Western science and democracy.⁶⁵ Totalistic Westernism was triggered by the two separate attempts instigated by Yuan Shikai and Kang Youwei to restore the monarchy and Confucianism.⁶⁶ Furthermore, totalistic Westernism was triggered both by radical intellectuals' predisposition to a "cultural-intellectualistic notion that stresses the necessary priority of intellectual and cultural change over political, social, and economic changes" and by the holistic mode of assumption about culture in which the social-political and cultural-moral order of the past must be treated as a whole and be rejected as a whole.⁶⁷

After both Yuan Shikai and Kang Youwei tried to restore the monarchy along with the Confucian order respectively in 1916 and 1917, radical intellectuals came to believe that Confucianism and the Chinese monarchical system must have had an inextricable relationship and that the former was inherently predisposed to despotism.⁶⁸ In addition, they believed the two events proved that the Chinese habit of subservience

⁶⁵ Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After*, vol. 12 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 420.

⁶⁶ Lin, *The Crisis*, 70-71.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-29.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 24, 70.

has remained persistent even after the overthrow of the Qing.⁶⁹ The target of the intellectuals' wrath was actually only *lijiao* (禮教 Confucianist teachings of proper social norms and behaviors), a cult of ritualized subordination that had been perpetuated through the institution of the examination system so that the ethic of filial piety could be adapted to the needs of the imperial bureaucratic state.⁷⁰ The cult of subordination values “hierarchy over equality, order over freedom, the past over the present, the state over the individual, subordination of child to parent, wife to husband, subject to ruler, and society to the state bureaucracy.”⁷¹ Even though *lijiao* happened to be the one strand of Confucianism that was not conceived by Confucius himself, it was perceived by the intellectuals as the cancer of the Chinese civilization.

Instead of removing the cancer and rehabilitating the patient, radical intellectuals proposed to eliminate the patient once and for all. Reinforced by their holistic mode of thinking, the radical intellectuals perceived the “Confucian tradition as a holistic entity in

⁶⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁷¹ Feng Chongyi, “The Party-state, Liberalism and Social Democracy: the Debate on China’s Future,” in *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market*, ed. Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 233.

that all later developments of Confucian theory and practice were organismic derivatives of the original whole, consisting of the [baneful] ideas of Confucius.”⁷² This conception of the holistic nature of Confucian tradition logically led radical intellectuals to conclude that it was impossible to reform Confucianism by synthesizing Confucianism and the modern culture of the West. Therefore, their prescription for China’s transformation was nothing less than a totalistic rejection of China’s traditional culture so as to pave the way for total Westernism.⁷³ Thus, by April 1918, Chen Duxiu was in full agreement with Qian Xuetong, a professor of linguistics at Peking University and an associate of the *New Youth*, that the Chinese script must be discarded in order to achieve a total rejection of Confucianism. Chen asserts that the Chinese script cannot communicate new things and new principles and is the home of rotten and poisonous [Confucian] thought.⁷⁴

Although Lin Yutang missed the heightened period of the New Culture movement because he was studying overseas, his sympathy clearly lay more with the totalistic Westernizers than with the orthodox Confucians. In the early 1920s, before he learned

⁷² Lin, *The Crisis*, 72.

⁷³ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 77.

about Chinese literary non-orthodox traditions, Lin even called for total Westernization because he attributed the greatness of Sun Yat-sen to his Westernized thought, mentality, and inclinations. In an open letter to Qian Xuetong to memorialize Sun Yat-sen's passing in 1925, Lin writes:

. . . In the entire Chinese republic there was only one great man, and when you really give it some thought you find that this one great man was three parts Chinese and seven parts foreign devil. Thus, if you want to produce great men for the future, then it can only be by making them 70 to 100 percent foreign devils The present political disorder in China entirely lies in our being an old imperial people with serious weaknesses Only because I want to pluck out this resignation to defeat and apply the needle to thwart this blight, I believe the only way is straightway to get ourselves Westernized.⁷⁵

III-2 Totalistic Marxism

This holistic and iconoclastic mode of thinking, according to the historian Lin Yusheng, greatly facilitated the transfer of iconoclasts' allegiance from totalistic Westernism to totalistic Marxism after the May Fourth Incident.⁷⁶ The immediate cause of the May Fourth Incident was the handling of the Shandong question at the Versailles Peace Conference in April 1919. The decision made by the Conference to hand over the former German concession in the Shandong Province to Japan rather than to China, who fought on the side of the Britain-France-US Alliance, was perceived by the Chinese as a gross

⁷⁵ Sohigian, "The Life and Times of Lin Yutang," 320-322.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 80, 155-58.

betrayal of China by the liberal West. Benjamin Schwartz points out that the “Versailles Treaty became a catalyst stimulating re-evaluation of the reform model of the [liberal] West, which had so powerfully influenced a whole generation’s vision of Chinese and world progress.”⁷⁷ In December 1919, Chen Duxiu proclaimed a manifesto in *New Youth* that it was time to abandon both Western liberalism and capitalism before he promptly founded the Chinese Communist Party in 1920.⁷⁸ The Treaty decision drove the “sentimental Chinese intelligentsia” toward Marxism because they mistook Great Power politics for liberalism and imperialism for capitalism and therefore naively concluded that Marxism was the antithesis to Western liberalism and capitalism.⁷⁹ The years after the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 witnessed the spectacular spread among the urban intelligentsia of certain versions of Marxism as a dominant intellectual outlook.⁸⁰ The May Thirtieth Incident, in which the British-led police fired on unarmed student and

⁷⁷ Schwartz, 402.

⁷⁸ Feng, 235. The Chinese Communist Party was created in secret in May 1920 even though July 1921 is the official CCP founding date. See Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 248.

⁷⁹ Feng, 233-34.

⁸⁰ Schwartz, 445-46.

worker protestors in the International Settlement in Shanghai, seemed to demonstrate concretely the link between the Leninist theory of imperialism and the exploitation of China's new industrial proletariat.⁸¹ To borrow Joseph Levenson's conclusion, communism allowed radical intellectuals to be iconoclastic and anti-imperialistic, enabling them to denounce both traditional Chinese culture and liberal Western culture at the same time.⁸²

Although totalistic Marxism could not contribute to the discourse of symmetrical cultural internationalism because of its outright rejection of Chinese culture, Lin Yutang neither opposed nor espoused Marxist ideology. Until he was targeted by the leftists in the 1930s, Lin abhorred the cultural-moral ideology of the Nationalist Party much more than that of the Communist Party. In fact, there has been a revisionist trend in mainland Chinese scholarship to "rehabilitate" Lin's political stance before his emigration to the US. The revisionists argue that Lin had more friends from the Communist Party than from the Nationalist party. Some forty leftist authors published their works on Lin's magazines, including Guo Moruo, on whom Chiang Kai-shek had issued an order of

⁸¹ Ibid., 446.

⁸² Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1965), 5-6.

arrest. Lin was also a member of the Chinese League for the Protection of Civil Rights and helped save some imprisoned leftist revolutionaries.⁸³ Xu Xu, co-editor of one of Lin's magazines, recalled that Lin was totally oblivious to matters related to social sciences or Marxist ideologies.⁸⁴ Lin Yutang simply had no interest in political ideology.

IV. Paradigm Three—Cultural Reconstructionism: Asymmetrical Cultural Internationalism with both Chinese and Western Substance

Jerome Grieder reminds us that the generalizations of the New Culture Movement must be interpreted with caution because the Movement “was the undertaking of intellectuals who shared an antipathy to the ‘old culture,’ but who differed among themselves as to how broadly this should be construed and the appropriate means to its transformation.”⁸⁵ Grieder adds:

Chen Duxiu was the iconoclast *par excellence*, an uncompromising and uncommonly virulent critic of the Chinese past, and of the shibboleths of contemporary “progressive” discourse. Others more temperate than he, like Hu Shi, made at least an effort to discriminate between Confucian

⁸³ Qian, 30-1.

⁸⁴ Xu Xu 徐訐 “Zhuisi Lin Yutang xiansheng” (追思林語堂先生 Reminiscing Mr. Lin Yutang) *Zhuanji wenxue* (傳記文學 Biographical Literature) 31, no. 6: 35.

⁸⁵ Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 239.

and non-Confucian elements in China's traditional culture, and to distinguish between the sterile pedagogy of orthodox Confucianism and other more vital sub-traditions of criticism and self-expression within the whole.”⁸⁶

Grieder's uncanny observation hints at the existence of the third cultural reform paradigm—cultural reconstructionism—of the New Culture Movement which is related but different from the totalistic iconoclast paradigm. The cultural reconstructionist paradigm advocated for the importation of Western learning not for the replacement of Chinese culture *in toto* but for the reconstruction of Chinese culture. The reason this paradigm has never been discussed before this thesis is that anti-Confucian iconoclasm has been equated with totalistic iconoclasm by not a few scholars who perceive Confucianism as the orthodox Chinese tradition. Based on this perception, New Culturalists who were dedicated to the rescue of non-Confucian Chinese traditions over Confucian tradition were also branded as totalistic iconoclasts.⁸⁷ On the other hand, we

⁸⁶ Ibid., 295.

⁸⁷ For example, Lin Yu-sheng was certainly correct in detecting Hu Shi's anti-Confucianism in the light of Hu's polemical writings. Hu Shi's polemics, written mostly to refute neo-Confucianist propaganda, did exhibit harsh opinions on odious Chinese characters and habits. However, Hu's opinions were no more acrimonious than those written by Liang Qichao or Yan Fu during the last decade of the Qing dynasty. In addition, Hu Shi did attribute the cause of Chinese degeneracy to the pernicious effects of two-millennia-long Confucianization and Indianization. Lin Yu-sheng, on the other hand, neglected to point out that Hu Shi devoted almost his entire academic career to recovering non-Confucian aspects of the Chinese past by producing numerous seminal scholarship on Chinese non-Confucian historical topics. Therefore, it is highly debatable whether Hu Shi can be branded as a “wholesale Westernizer,” “anti-traditionalist,”

have scholars such as Jerome Grieder, author of the seminal study on Hu Shi, and Laurence Schneider, author of the seminal study on Gu Jiegang, who clearly sensed the existence of two factions within the New Culture Movement—totalistic iconoclasm and cultural reconstructionism.⁸⁸

“totalistic iconoclast,” or “pseudo-reformist.” See Chapter 5 of *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* for Lin’s complete argument.

⁸⁸ After the publication of Lin Yu-sheng’s *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* in 1979, Jerome Grieder drew our attention in 1981 to the distinction between Confucian and non-Confucian elements in Chinese traditional culture. See Grieder’s quote on a previous page and the last footnote. In 1982, Yu Ying-shih wrote an article to remind us that Chinese tradition is complex enough to have encompassed orthodox, non-orthodox, anti-orthodox, and heterodox traditions. See Yu Ying-shih 余英時, “Wusi yundong yu zhongguo chuantong,” (五四運動與中國傳統 The May Fourth Movement and Chinese Tradition) in *Shixue yu chuantong* (史學與傳統 Historiography and Tradition) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiye youxian gongsi, 1982), 103-06. Subsequently, there has been a host of prominent mainland scholars who have seconded Yu’s remark and challenged Lin Yu-sheng’s equation of Hu Shi or May Fourth Movement with anti-traditionalism. See Wang Yuanhua 王元化, “Lun chuantong yu fan chuantong,” (論傳統與反傳統 On Traditionalism and Anti-traditionalism) in *Lun chuantong yu fan chuantong: wusi qishi zhounian jinian wenxuan* (論傳統與反傳統：五四七十周年紀念文選 On Traditionalism and Anti-traditionalism: Selected Works in Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the May Fourth Movement), ed. Tang Yijie 湯一介 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1989), 33-38. Also in the same book title, see Geng Yunzhi 耿雲志, “Hu Shi de wenhuaguan ji qi xiandai yiyi,” (胡適的文化觀及其現代意義 The Modern Meanings of Hu Shi’s Cultural Concepts) 333-34, 351-53. Lastly, see Ouyang Zhesheng 歐陽哲生, “Hu Shi dui ruxue de shuangchong fansheng,” (胡適對儒學雙重反省 Hu Shi’s Double Reflections on Confucian Studies) *Chuantong wenhua yu xiandai hua* (傳統文化與現代化 Chinese Culture: Tradition & Modernization), no. 1 (January 1995): 28-29. For the earliest work on Hu Shi’s and Gu Jiegang’s dedication to indigenous cultural pluralism or cultural reconstructionism, see Laurence A. Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang and China’s New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 54-62.

Now that I have clarified that the origin of the third paradigm—cultural reconstructionism—as one faction of the New Culture Movement, I will proceed to show how this third paradigm was further divided into two camps—anti-orthodoxy and pro-orthodoxy. Confucianism has been honored as the state orthodoxy since the time of the Eastern Han dynasty while the other major schools of thoughts were condemned as heterodoxy. But once Daoism and Buddhism came under the bureaucratic control of the state during Song dynasty, they were considered as non-orthodoxy rather than heterodoxy.⁸⁹

In 2001, Yu Ying-shih made a proposition to include some formerly so-called conservatives in the same discursive structure of the New Culture Movement.⁹⁰ Yu's proposition actually helped to posit two oppositional camps within the framework of the third paradigm. Yu reminds us that before the emergence of totalistic iconoclasm, the early days of the New Culture Movement was meant to be a New Thought project formulated by Hu Shi. The project was not just about the denunciation of Confucianism

⁸⁹ Kwang-ching Liu and Richard Shek, ed., introduction to *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 3.

⁹⁰ Yu Ying-shih, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment: A Historian's Reflections on the May Fourth Movement," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Oldrich Kral (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 312-18.

or advocacy of Western science and democracy. It was intended to promote simultaneously the importation of Western thought and scholarship for the reconstruction of Chinese civilization with a critical attitude and methodology.⁹¹ Guided by Hu Shi's formulation, Yu argues that the so-called conservatives who were more sympathetic to Confucian orthodoxy but were no less dedicated to importing Western values to reform Confucianism should also be included in the same discursive structure of the New Culture. Thus, Yu aligns himself with the growing demand to detach pro-orthodoxy Westernized intellectuals such as the *Critical Review* (學衡 *Xueheng*) group from the category of cultural conservatism and admit them into the New Culture Hall of Fame, to which New Culture radical Chen Duxiu and New Culture liberal Hu Shi already belonged.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid., 312-13.

⁹² See Lin Liyue 林麗月, "Mei Guangdi yu xin wenhua yundong," (梅光迪與新文化運動 Mei Guangdi and the New Culture Movement) in *Wusi yanjiu lunwen ji* (五四研就論文集 Collected Studies on the May Fourth Movement), ed. Wang Rongzu 王榮祖 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gonsi, 1979), 383-402. Yue Daiyun 樂黛雲, "Chonggu *Xueheng*: jian lun xiandai baoshou zhuyi," (重估《學衡》：兼論現代保守主義 Re-examining the *Critical Review*: and On Modern Conservatism) in *Lun chuantong yu fan chuantong: wusi qishi zhounian jinian wenxuan* (論傳統與反傳統：五四七十周年紀念文選 On Traditionalism and Anti-traditionalism: Selected Works in Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the May Fourth Movement), ed. Tang Yijie 湯一介 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1989), 415-428.

Guided by Grieder's and Yu's illumination, I will now introduce the two camps of the third paradigm: Hu Shi's anti-orthodoxy camp and *Xueheng's* (*Critical Review's*) pro-orthodoxy camp. To struggle for recognition as the sole legitimate voice of cultural reconstructionism, both camps mounted their offensive by employing modern theories, scholarship, and journals as ammunition. As we shall see, the revolutionary application of Western theory and methodology to legitimize non-orthodox Chinese traditions by the anti-orthodoxy camp was so awe-inspiring that it is no wonder Lin Yutang chose to capitalize on the legacy of the framework to fashion his brand of cultural internationalism.

Despite their ideological differences, the two camps of the cultural reconstructionists have two things in common: both were anxious to legitimize their visions of Chinese literature and philosophy by using models found in the liberal West, and both aimed to connect the best in modern civilization with the best in Chinese civilization so that they can be both modern and Chinese. Since the pro-orthodoxy journal *Xueheng* (*Critical Review*) was not founded until 1922 with the purpose to counter radical intellectuals, who included both the totalistic iconoclasts and the anti-orthodoxy reformers in the founders' mind, I will discuss Hu Shi's anti-orthodoxy agenda first.

IV-1 Cultural Reconstructionism and Anti-orthodoxy

The concept of anti-orthodoxy was not invented by Hu Shi. Back in 1982, Yu Ying-shih wrote an article to argue that the New Culture ideologies did not originate exclusively from the West but also from scholarship on non-orthodox and heterodox Chinese traditions produced by late Qing scholars Zhang Binglin and Wang Guowei.⁹³ Nevertheless, Hu Shi's late Qing predecessors had neither the training nor ability to connect the best in modern civilization with the best in Chinese civilization, orthodox or non-orthodox.⁹⁴ More importantly, they studied Chinese non-orthodox traditions with a scholarly interest rather than with the purpose of dethroning Confucianism.⁹⁵ Hu Shi, however, learned to detect the parallel development of both the orthodox and non-orthodox Chinese traditions with his Western education. Armed with a methodology from John Dewey's Pragmatism, Hu Shi could argue cogently that non-orthodox Chinese

⁹³ Yu Ying-shih 余英時, "Wusi yundong yu zhongguo chuantong," (五四運動與中國傳統 The May Fourth Movement and Chinese Tradition) in *Shixue yu chuangtong* (史學與傳統 Historiography and Tradition) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chubanshi, 1982), 93-107.

⁹⁴ Laurence A. Schneider, "National Essence and the New Intelligentsia," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 65-66.

⁹⁵ Yu, *Zhongguo*, 13-18, 36-37.

traditions had managed to develop progressively along the evolutionary spectrum whereas the orthodox Chinese tradition had failed to progress long ago. Thus, Hu Shi's acquisition of Western theories was to serve the legitimacy of the non-orthodox Chinese tradition.

Before he turned 26, Hu Shi had already set his anti-orthodoxy agenda in motion by leveling the playing field for non-orthodox Chinese philosophies while he was still in America. In May 1917, he defended successfully his dissertation, entitled "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China," with John Dewey sitting as chairman of the examining board. The thesis was designed to uncover the hitherto unrecognized evolution of logical method of classical Chinese philosophy, especially in the non-orthodox and heterodox schools.⁹⁶ In essence, he found that Chinese philosophers not only had a logical methodology but also evolved their philosophies around it. Thus, his thesis aimed to wipe out the old concept that Chinese philosophy consisted chiefly of ethical aphorisms.⁹⁷ In the introduction to his dissertation, Hu Shi

⁹⁶ Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 43.

⁹⁷ Wing-tsit Chan, "Hu Shih and Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 6 (1956): 8-9.

practically outlined the content of anti-orthodoxy cultural reconstructionist agenda. He wrote:

How can we Chinese feel at ease in this new world which at first sight appears to be so much at variance with what we have long regarded as our own civilization? . . . And it would surely be a great loss to mankind at large if the acceptance of this new civilization should take the form of abrupt displacement instead of organic assimilation, thereby causing the disappearance of the old civilization . . . Where can we find a congenial stock with which we may organically link the thought-systems of modern Europe and America, so that we may further build up our own science and philosophy on the new foundation of an internal assimilation of the old and the new . . . I am firmly of the opinion that the future of Chinese philosophy depends upon its emancipation from the moralistic and rationalistic fetters of Confucianism. This emancipation cannot be accomplished by any wholesale importation of occidental philosophies alone. It can be achieved only by putting Confucianism back to its proper place; that is, by restoring it to its historical background. Confucianism was once only one of the many rival systems flourishing in ancient China. The dethronement of Confucianism, therefore, will be ensured when it is regarded not as the solitary source of spiritual, moral, and philosophical authority but merely as one star in a great galaxy of philosophical luminaries . . . I believe that the revival of the non-Confucian schools is absolutely necessary because it is in these schools that we may hope to find the congenial soil in which to transplant the best products of occidental philosophy and science.⁹⁸

In essence, Hu Shi's anti-orthodoxy was more of a dedication to indigenous cultural pluralism than anti-Confucianism. Therefore, he spent a significant portion of his dissertation discussing the non-orthodox schools of ancient Chinese philosophy.

In 1919, Hu Shi inaugurated a new paradigm for Chinese philosophical historiography by publishing in Chinese *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, which is a more substantial version of his doctoral dissertation. Both Yu Ying-shih and

⁹⁸ Hu Shih, introduction to *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* (1922; repr., New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1963), 6-10.

Wing-tsit Chan attributed this epoch-making scholarship to Hu Shi's unique academic background that enabled him brilliantly to apply Qing textual criticism, American Pragmatist theory, and Western scientific methodologies to the study of Chinese philosophical works.⁹⁹ According to the preface written by Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi was the first historian to give an outline of Chinese philosophy and to provide equality to all major ancient Chinese philosophical schools hitherto subordinated to the Confucian school for over a thousand years.¹⁰⁰ The pattern of his outline for each major Chinese philosophical school is still being followed today.¹⁰¹ His chapter on the relationship between Neo-Moism and the ancient logical movement impressed even old-time orthodox-leaning scholar Liang Qichao.¹⁰² In addition to his new interpretation on Xunzi, Hu Shi also removed the mysticism of Daoism by arguing that both Laozi and Zhuangzi are not mystics but rebels who championed the cause of complete individual freedom.¹⁰³ Hu's scholarship no doubt inspired Lin Yutang's belated interest in

⁹⁹ Yu, *Zhongguo*, 87-90; Chan, "Hu Shih," 6-7.

¹⁰⁰ Yu, 87-90; Chan, 5, 9.

¹⁰¹ Chan, 5.

¹⁰² Yu, 42.

¹⁰³ Chan, 9.

philosophy and in Daoism, where he ultimately found the link to serve his formulation of symmetrical cultural internationalism. Thus, we can see that Hu Shi's strategy of dethroning Confucianism was to elevate the prestige of non-orthodox philosophical schools through academic research. His strategy greatly contrasts with the iconoclast Chen Duxiu, who relied on contentious polemical writings to denounce Confucianism.

Hu Shi's unique talent in academic research ushered in another revolutionary anti-orthodoxy agenda—the literary revolution—the inauguration of the era of modern Chinese literature by the replacement of the *wenyan* (文言 classical language), the language of Confucian orthodoxy, with the non-orthodox *baihua* (白話 vernacular language) as the literary language. Again, Hu Shi was the architect who provided ample theoretical ammunition to support Chen Duxiu's execution of the revolution. *Wenyan* has always been difficult to learn because it is unintelligible when being spoken and could be mastered only by a tiny minority of the Chinese population. Therefore, the literary revolution aimed to accomplish the twin purposes of reform of Chinese literature and the popularization of education. The idea of advancing the usage of *baihua* did not begin with Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, for late Qing reformers had already recognized *baihua* as a medium of popularization and political education. However, Hu Shi was the first to propose the replacement of *wenyan* with *baihua* as the major form of literary

expression.¹⁰⁴ Hu Shi reasoned that unless the prestige of *baihua* was elevated, all language reforms were bound to fail because no one wanted to learn a language that was despised by those who advocated it. Besides, it was impossible for reformers to maintain their enthusiasm to continue writing and publishing in a language that they themselves considered inferior.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, Hu Shi thought *wenyan* was a dead language suitable only as a linguistic medium for written communication whereas *baihua* has been the only suitable medium and inspirational source for Chinese modern literature in the Western style. Hu Shi concluded that the unwarranted existence of *wenyan* had been extended by the power of a long united empire and the universal system of civil examination.¹⁰⁶ Hu's publication of three articles on literary revolution in *New Youth* in 1917 and 1918, so clearly and persuasively written, represents a mega milestone in Chinese intellectual and

¹⁰⁴ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Literary Trends I: the Quest for Modernity, 1895-1927*, vol. 12 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 446-67.

¹⁰⁵ Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (1934; repr., New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1963), 49.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

literary histories.¹⁰⁷ By the time Hu Shi accompanied John Dewey to Shanghai in May 1919 at the age of 27, the mere mention of his name left young intellectuals of Shanghai trembling.¹⁰⁸ The literary revolution won the ideological battle when the Ministry of Education in 1921 decreed that *baihua* would henceforth be used exclusively in primary school texts.¹⁰⁹

In 1928, to further legitimize *baihua*, Hu Shi wrote a scholarly work entitled *History of Vernacular Literature* to substantiate the millennia-long development of China's "living" vernacular literature with the deliberate application of the Darwinian concept of evolution. Leo Lee argues that Hu Shi indeed broke new ground by applying the scientific concept of evolution to Chinese literature. Therefore, "in attempting to bring the vernacular strain of Chinese literature to the forefront of this developmental scheme, he labeled it a "living"—as opposed to a "dead"—literary tradition."¹¹⁰ Hu

¹⁰⁷ The three Chinese articles, published in the *New Youth*, are: "Tentative Proposals for the Improvement of Literature" (January 1917); "On the Genetic Concept of Literature (May 1917)"; "On a Constructive Literary Revolution" (April 1918).

¹⁰⁸ Grieder, *Hu Shih*, 122.

¹⁰⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Literary Trend I*, 470.

¹¹⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Incomplete Modernity: Rethinking the May Fourth Intellectual Project," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 46.

Shi's view on Chinese literary history eventually became indisputable and has been accepted as dogma by most prominent China scholars throughout the world.¹¹¹ Recently, although a few scholars have expressed their reservations about the validity of Hu Shi's findings, they all unanimously concede that Hu Shi's rhetorical strategies of narration and discursive formations of his theory are unsurpassed.¹¹²

As we can see, Hu Shi's dedication to preserve China's non-orthodox tradition greatly differs from the cultural reform ideologies of his radical iconoclast peers. Xian Xuetong, a professor of linguistics at Peking University, argued that the destruction of the Chinese written language, which has served as the repository of Confucian morality and Daoist superstition, is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of that task.¹¹³ Wu Zhihui, China's Voltaire, recommended the replacement of Chinese script with Esperanto and the disposal of old Chinese books into the latrine.¹¹⁴ In spite of Hu Shi's concern for

¹¹¹ Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and David Der-wei Wang, introduction to *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 2-3.

¹¹² Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Incomplete Modernity," 45-51. In *Appropriation*, see also Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova, "Literary Historiography in Early Twentieth-Century China (1904-1928): Constructions of Cultural Memory," 153-59; and Stephen Owen, "The End of the Past: Rewriting Chinese Literary History in the Early Republic," 174-181.

¹¹³ Grieder, *Intellectuals*, 231-32.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

maintaining a continuous cultural identity, his version of a genetic approach to cultural reconstruction did not please quite a few of his orthodox peers who, although they were eager to apply Western ideas, wanted to maintain the orthodox version of Chinese identity by defending Confucianism and *wenyan*.

Lin Yutang's early affinity with the literary revolution can be traced to August 1917, when Hu Shi arrived in Beijing after his graduation from Columbia University. Lin was there to greet him, for Hu Shi had already gained national fame as an advocate of literary revolution. Lin reminisced, "When I heard him quote the brave words spoken by Erasmus upon returning home from Italy—'we are now back, and everything will be different'—I felt our country had suddenly entered the turbulent sea of the renaissance."¹¹⁵ Although Lin had to leave for Harvard in two years and missed the heightened period of the New Culture Movement, he still managed to write a few articles regarding the evolution of popular English and Italian to support the literary revolution before his departure.¹¹⁶ When Lin returned to China in 1923, he must have read Hu Shi's *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* published in 1922. Lin cited

¹¹⁵ Huang Airen, "Hu Shi and Lin Yutang," *Chinese Studies in History* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 38.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

the work in his own book *From Pagan to Christian* in 1959 to encourage his readers to explore the “incredible complexity and richness of thought of divergent schools in the few centuries following Confucius.”¹¹⁷ Lin Yutang never wavered on his commitment to promote Chinese non-orthodox traditions either.

IV-2 Cultural Reconstructionism and Pro-orthodoxy

Xueheng (學衡 *Critical Review* 1922-33, hereafter CR) was founded by Wu Mi and Mei Guangdi with the mission to counter the anti-orthodoxy agenda of dethroning Confucianism and dethroning the classical language.¹¹⁸ Because their sincerity in reconstructing Chinese culture with Western ideas has been found to be no less than the sincerity of their New Culturist counterparts, I have placed CR members in the New Culture reconstructionist paradigm in spite of their pro-orthodox leaning.¹¹⁹ CR’s defense of the classical language was actually intertwined with their defense of Confucianism. When Hu Shi advocated the literary revolution, his goal was to create a new literature in the vernacular language. He expounded at great length on linguistic

¹¹⁷ Lin, *From Pagan to Christian*, 64.

¹¹⁸ Yu, “Neither,” 314.

¹¹⁹ See my introduction to the third paradigm in Section IV of this chapter.

tools and literary techniques but not on the social and cultural implications of the literary revolution.¹²⁰ However, Jerome Grieder points out that both his supporters and opponents knew from the start that the classical language is also a repository for the Confucian culture and attitudes. Therefore, Hu Shi's opponents were actually defending a whole system of Confucian values.¹²¹

Although Hu Shi's opponents were against his anti-orthodoxy agenda, they were forced to emulate Hu Shi's discursive method in order to challenge him. In his long introduction on Hu Shi's role in modern Chinese intellectual history, Yu Ying-shih explains how Hu Shi's unique training enabled him to break through the lopsided *ti-yong* discursive framework that could never articulate Western culture intelligibly. Thus, Hu Shi's arrival ushered in a new discursive standard that demands the discussion of Western learning in terms of holistic concepts rather than in terms of piecemeal functional components. Since his return to China from Columbia University, intellectuals were compelled to follow this new discursive standard when debating about cultural

¹²⁰ Lee, *Literary Trend I*, 470.

¹²¹ Grieder, *Hu Shih*, 77. Laurence Schneider attributes the origins of CR group's pro-orthodox position to their innate elitism and fear of mass democracy. See Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang*, 159-161; Schneider, "National Essence and the New Intelligentsia," 80-81, 87-89.

reforms.¹²² Both Wu Mi and Mei Guangdi, former Harvard students, were compelled to mobilize Western conceptual devices that subscribed to this new discursive standard.

Therefore, the CR group was compelled to integrate Confucianism with and New Humanism as the epistemological foundation of CR.¹²³

New Humanism, founded by Irving Babbitt of Harvard University, was a minor philosophical movement that opposed Darwinism, Marxism, Pragmatism, scientism and advocated a return to the classics.¹²⁴ In his essay titled “Humanistic Education in China and the West,” Babbitt urged the Chinese youth “to follow what he called a humanistic internationalism that blended the essential Greek background of the West with the essential Confucian background of the East.”¹²⁵ Mei Guangdi was especially attracted to the secular moralism of New Humanism and thought that it could serve as a viable means

¹²² Yu, *Zhongguo*, 16-20.

¹²³ Shih, Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 170.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹²⁵ Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 248.

for reconstructing the Confucian moral teachings.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, CR's cause was doomed from the start not only because of the rising iconoclastic intellectual tide, but also because of their lack of cogent arguments and scholarship that might have given legitimacy to their cause.

Lydia Liu observes astutely on how New Culture writers [which did not include the CR group at the time] legitimized their supremacy by strategically investing in theoretical discourses and institutionalizing practices such as cannon making, criticism, and the writing of literary history. The strategy was crucial because “theory legitimizes and is in turn legitimated; and, in its ability to name, cite, invoke, and perform rhetorical acts, it reproduces, multiplies, and distributes symbolic wealth and power.”¹²⁷ In their battles for legitimacy, CR members apparently failed to recognize the strategy or erred in executing it. The mission of CR was supposed to show how Confucian humanism was as respectable as Western classical humanism. However, the CR group did not produce any scholarship or viable theories that illustrate the unique position of Confucianism in relation to humanistic internationalism or produce a hermeneutic model of a

¹²⁶ Ya-pei Kuo, “The Crisis of Culture in Modern Chinese Conservatism: The Case of *The Critical Review*” (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), 160.

¹²⁷ Liu, 233.

reconstructed Confucianism. The CR group merely appointed itself the final authority to decree that latest Western ideas represented false Western traditions whereas Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions represented true Western traditions.¹²⁸

Ya-pei Kuo points out that the faulty argument presented by Mei Guangdi actually legitimized the anti-Confucianist position of New Culturalists. By drawing out universal elements of Confucianism instead of elucidating the unique Chinese view of universalism, Mei ended up agreeing with Hu Shi that Chinese culture had nothing unique to offer to the world since its professed values were universal to all civilizations.¹²⁹ Kuo opines that in the end, Mei could only prove that he was more of a New Humanist than a Confucianist.¹³⁰ Regarding Wu Mi's defense of classical language, Kuo points out that Wu could neither prove the supremacy of classical language nor deny the potential of the vernacular language as a literary medium. Finally, Wu Mi had to abandon the orthodox claim of the classical language and literature and suggested the co-

¹²⁸ Ibid., 249.

¹²⁹ Kuo, 212, 258-60.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 213.

existence of the two languages: *baihua* and *wenyan*.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Wu Mi persisted in using *wenyan* in the *Critical Review* journal until the end.

Most importantly, Lydia Liu concludes that by merely parroting the conservative line of European Enlightenment to defend Confucian orthodoxy, Mei Guangdi appeared to have reinforced the cultural domination of the liberal West and was doomed to fail in his effort.¹³² In fact, the nationalist struggle against Western imperialism was the chief reason for radical iconoclasts turning from totalistic Westernism to totalistic Marxism. In the end, it was the political prowess of the Nationalist Party that ensured the victory of CR's pro-orthodoxy agenda but without the CR version of a transformed and universalistic Confucianism. Therefore, I would conclude that the CR group was belatedly admitted to the New Culture Hall of Fame for their effort in introducing New Humanism to China but not for providing a viable model for cultural reconstruction. Hu Shi, on the other hand, managed to use Western theories as a tool for the legitimacy of non-orthodox Chinese traditions. The final identity of his reconstructed Chinese culture

¹³¹ Ibid., 269-270.

¹³² Liu, 253.

was still indigenous Chinese. Thus, in 1933, Hu Shi was able to declare with confidence:

Slowly, quietly, but unmistakably, the Chinese Renaissance is becoming a reality.¹³³ The product of this rebirth looks suspiciously occidental. But, scratch its surface and you will find that the stuff of which is made is essentially the Chinese bedrock which much weathering and corrosion have only made stand out more clearly—the humanistic and rationalistic China resurrected by the touch of the scientific and democratic civilization of the new world.¹³⁴

While Hu Shi was busy with constructing a “Chinese Renaissance,” Lin Yutang had been quietly watching the slow demise of *The Critical Review*. Despite his abhorrence of moralism, Confucian or New Humanist, Lin did not contribute to the polemics between the two reconstructionist camps because of the feeble impact of *The Critical Review*.

Lin, However, summarized his dismissive attitude toward Wu Mi and Irving Babbitt in his memoirs:

His [Babbitt’s] influence on Chinese was far-reaching. Lou Kuang-lai and Wu Mi carried his ideas to China. Shaped like a monk, Wu Mi’s love affair with his girl would make a novel. Wu and Lou were good in Chinese, and they were orthodox in their point of view, veering less toward the “colloquial” style that was the rage called by the Literary Revolution. They sat on the same bench with me. I was forced to borrow the Port-Royal and have a glance at it. I refused to accept Babbitt’s criteria and once took up the cudgels for Spingarn and eventually was in complete agreement with Croce with regard to the genesis of all criticism as “expression.”¹³⁵

¹³³ Hu Shi states that the term “Chinese Renaissance” was sometimes called the “New Culture Movement,” “New Thought,” or “New Tide.” See Hu, *The Chinese Renaissance*, 44.

¹³⁴ Hu, preface to *The Chinese Renaissance*.

¹³⁵ Lin, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, (Taipei: Mei Ya Publication, Inc., 1975), 43.

But when Babbitt's most eloquent Chinese student, Liang Shiqiu, was about to publish a collection on Babbitt and New Humanism in 1929, Lin sought to contain the potential popularity of Babbitt that Liang's book might bring. Just before the release of Liang's book, Lin translated "New Criticism," written by J. E. Spingarn, Babbitt's ideological opponent, and wrote a lengthy impassioned preface.

Although Hu Shi and Lin Yutang greatly espoused this anti-orthodoxy reconstructionist paradigm, it was adopted neither by the *tiyong*-leaning Nationalist Party nor the totalistic Marxist-leaning Communist Party and has been mostly forgotten by now. However, before the Japanese invasion of China, Hu Shi's anti-orthodoxy framework had provided great inspiration to his former students and later eminent China scholars Gu Jiegang, Yu Pingbo, and Fu Sinian. Unbeknownst to Hu Shi, he left a legacy for Lin Yutang to construct a framework for symmetrical cultural internationalism. In a sense, Lin had no choice but to adopt the third paradigm to implement symmetrical cultural internationalism. Regardless of what Lin's political or cultural ideologies were, it is logically inconceivable to construct a framework for symmetrical cultural internationalism with the mono-substance of either the first or the second paradigm. As a matter of fact, Lin's cultural ideological journey did travel across the three paradigms within the three decades after his return to China from his overseas education in 1923.

During the 1920s, when Lin had not yet discovered Chinese non-orthodox literary traditions, he, like most hot-blooded radical iconoclasts, advocated for totalistic Westernism because of his absolute lack of faith in the Confucian tradition. Like other totalistic Westernizers, Lin espoused asymmetrical cultural internationalism by importing Western literary ideas to replace the outmoded Chinese literary tradition. Lin, only eight months after his return to China, was already eager to promote Western literary humor by publishing two short articles that coined the Chinese neologism “youmo” for the English word “humor” and provided a brief interpretation of his neologism. However, since he had not established his literary reputation or founded a literary platform for his cause, Lin received feeble response and had to defer his agenda to 1932.

It was not until the 1930s, the second decade of his return to China, that Lin gained faith in some aspects of the Chinese tradition and thus was able to subscribe to the third paradigm. Moreover, by 1928, Lin had also gained sufficient literary fame to mobilize his asymmetrical-turned-symmetrical cultural internationalist agenda. Therefore, in 1928, Lin started to introduce Western expressionist literary theory to curb literary Confucian moralism. But by late 1932, Lin discovered, via Zhou Zuoren, certain Chinese non-orthodox literary ideas, along with certain Western ideas, that he considered worthy of the modern world and worthy of his promotion. Because of Lin’s dedication to

searching for harmonious links between Chinese non-orthodox aesthetics and Western aesthetics as the basis of his cultural reconstructionist project, he was able to use these links as the essence of his framework of symmetrical cultural internationalism. Thus the decade between 1928 and 1938 is considered Lin's golden era of symmetrical cultural internationalism—the era of simultaneous success in importing Western ideas and in exporting Chinese ideas.

Ironically, from 1939 to 1967, Lin was performing only “reverse” asymmetrical cultural internationalism by one-way exporting Chinese culture—orthodox and non-orthodox—and his own political ideologies—anti-communism and anti-imperialism—to the West. More importantly, the contents of his literary exports contain fewer and fewer links between Chinese and Western cultures. Most ironically, Lin, like his ultraconservative bicultural mentor Gu Hongming, even believed that the most orthodox Confucian code of ruling would benefit the Western world.¹³⁶

Lin's third stage of cultural internationalism, “reverse” asymmetrical cultural internationalism, and his sudden tolerance of Confucianism can be explained by several factors. First, by the 1940s, because of the on-going war with Japan and the subsequent

¹³⁶ For Lin Yutang's political ideologies and orthodox-leaning ideologies, see *Between Tears and Laughter* and *The Vigil of a Nation* published by The John Day Company in 1943 and 1944 respectively.

communist takeover, China's domestic political and cultural environments were no longer conducive for importation of Western ideas. Second, Lin had already attracted sufficient worldwide readership that he could risk exporting particular Chinese ideas—such as Confucianism—rather than exporting exclusively universal non-orthodox Chinese ideas. By the early 1940s, Lin came to believe that with all the evils that Confucianism embodied, Confucianism never instigated two world wars within two decades. Therefore, like Gu Hongming, Lin seriously considered the Confucian code of government by propriety, ritual, and music as a preemptive antidote to Western materialism, which he believed was the root of Western imperialism. Third, Lin had also established sufficient prestige to propagate his own political ideologies and to mobilize public opinion in the United States for his anti-communist mission.

Even though Lin's popularity did decline as a result of these political experiments in the 1940s, he perhaps thought that his anti-communist mission was more important than his cultural mission. Nevertheless, Lin was still able to publish an additional two dozens books in two decades before his permanent departure from the United States in 1966. Lin's third stage of cultural internationalism—"reverse" asymmetrical cultural internationalism—is definitely a worthy topic for study; however, it is beyond the scope of this research study. Instead, I have focused my thesis on his cultural paradigmatic

orientation from 1928 to 1938—the golden era of Lin Yutang’s cultural internationalism—during which he consciously sought to link Chinese and Western cultures.

Chapter Four

Methodology of Lin Yutang's Symmetrical Cultural Internationalism:

A Matter of Taste

Lin Yutang did not achieve his status as an eminent twentieth-century cultural internationalist intentionally or by design. His initial objective was only to carry on the legacy of the third paradigm—anti-orthodoxy cultural reconstructionism—by importing Western ideas to reconstruct Chinese non-orthodox literary traditions that he considered “good taste” in the modern sense. With the rejection of Confucian orthodoxy, Lin, like most New Culture intellectuals, was trying to assert a new order by creating a New Literature that would establish new values and a new consciousness. In the process, he unwittingly devised a framework that worked symmetrically because of its harmonious congruity between Chinese non-orthodox aesthetics and Western aesthetics. When opportunity finally arose in 1935, Lin Yutang’s harmonious framework inadvertently turned into a symmetrical cultural internationalist framework that led to the successful exportation of non-orthodoxy Chinese aesthetics. Yu Ying-shih, in his 1995 article on Lin Yutang, asserts that in contrary to the leftists’ accusation, Lin did not concoct an aesthetic solely for the purpose of exportation. Yu emphasizes that Lin, like Hu Shi and

Zhou Zuoren, also belonged to the anti-orthodoxy camp and that Lin's literary aesthetics represent his personal disposition, a popular trend in the Chinese intelligentsia in the early 1930's, and a legacy of the Chinese spiritual tradition.¹³⁷

Although Hu Shi introduced the idea of linking Chinese and Western cultures, unlike Lin Yutang, he did not follow through. Laurence Schneider points out that when Hu Shi sought out those "congenial Chinese stocks" to link the thought-systems of modern Europe and America in his doctoral dissertation, Hu "employed some rather facile arguments that find little repetition in his future thought or studies."¹³⁸ Schneider explains that Hu Shi's later primary goal was "not to link European and Chinese cultures, but rather to link China's past and China's present."¹³⁹ Hu Shi, in his introduction to his dissertation, even hinted at the importance of the linkage task. He writes: "When the philosophies of ancient China are interpreted in terms of modern philosophy, and when

¹³⁷ Yu Ying-shih 余英時, "Shi lun Lin Yutang de haiwai zhushu," (試論林語堂的海外著述 A Tentative Discussion on Lin Yutang's Overseas Literary Works) in *Lishi renwu yu wenhua weiji* (歷史人物與文化危機 Historical Figures and Cultural Crisis) (Taipei: Dongda Tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1995), 127-133.

¹³⁸ Laurence A. Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 62.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 62.

modern philosophy is interpreted in terms of the native systems of China, then, and not until then, can Chinese philosophers and students of philosophy truly feel at ease with the new methods.”¹⁴⁰ However, Hu Shi later rarely performed the linkage tasks because his advocacy of indigenous cultural pluralism dictated his research priority: exploring the non-orthodox traditions of pre-modern China.

Lin Yutang, on the other hand, was compelled to perform the linkage of Western and Chinese cultures to advance Chinese literary modernity and cross-cultural exchange. He introduced his preferred models of Western literary theory and style to China and linked them to Chinese non-orthodox literary traditions so that he could present them in both Chinese and Western terms. The goal of his importation of Western ideas was not only to counter the legacies of orthodox Neo-Confucian outmoded thoughts and literary practices, but also to create a new literary style that is both modern and Chinese. Lin not only mobilized Western theories, but also Hu Shi’s anti-orthodoxy cultural ideology and Zhou Zouren’s anti-orthodoxy literary ideology to advance his agenda.

I. Importing a Western Literary Genre of “Good Taste”—the Personal Essay

¹⁴⁰ Hu Shih, introduction to *The Development*, 9.

Fortunately for Lin Yutang, Zhou Zuoren, one of the most erudite New Culturalists, had been steadily performing the crucial task of finding pre-modern Chinese antecedents to new Chinese literary thoughts to facilitate China's Literary Renaissance project. Zhou not only developed a modern literary genre—the personal essay, but also theorized the pre-modern non-orthodox Chinese origin of the genre. To give cultural legitimacy to these non-orthodox literary aesthetics, Lin Yutang's self-imposed task was to link them with modern Western literary currents in order to facilitate a new literary consciousness that is both modern and Chinese.

Zhou Zuoren was among the first in the history of Chinese modern literature to insist on both a literary revolution and an intellectual revolution. To Zhou, the literary revolution means just writing in the vernacular, and the intellectual revolution means replacing the absurd ideas embedded in classical prose (古文 *guwen*) with modern ideas.¹⁴¹ Zhou reasons that while *guwen* can be eradicated, the unnatural and absurd mode of thinking, which results from the old Confucian orthodox morality, cannot be easily eliminated. In fact, Zhou fears that the popularization of the vernacular might even

¹⁴¹ Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 48.

enable these old thoughts to spread.¹⁴² Therefore, he introduces the personal essay, a genre with a natural and modern sensibility, to curb the pernicious legacy of *guwen*. Zhou explains that the modern essay genre, unlike *guwen*, demands genuineness, conciseness, and personal words and thoughts.¹⁴³ When Zhou first expounded on the theory of the essay in 1921, he claimed that while some of the Chinese prefaces, jottings, and anecdotes written in *guwen* could be considered a form of the essay, this genre did not exist in contemporary vernacular literature.

Heeding Zhou's call, many writers eagerly developed the essay as a vehicle for personal expression.¹⁴⁴ By 1922, after taking stock of the success of the new literature in the vernacular, Hu Shi declared that the short essay (小品散文 *xiaopin sanwen*) promoted by Zhou Zuoren and others, was the most noticeable development in the genre of essay and that the success of this genre thoroughly dispelled the superstition that the

¹⁴² Ibid., 49.

¹⁴³ David E. Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature: The Literary Values of Chou Tso-jen in Relation to the Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 105.

¹⁴⁴ Daruvala, 172.

vernacular cannot be used for belles letters.¹⁴⁵ Hu's declaration is echoed by Lin Yutang

in *My Country and My People*:

Two important changes followed the literary revolution. First, the cultivation of the personal style of writing represented by the Zhou brothers, Zhou Zuoren and Zhou Shuren (Luxun). It is noteworthy that Zhou Zuoren was greatly influenced by the school of Yuan Zhonglang [of Ming Gong'an district]. The second change was the so-called "Europeanization" of Chinese . . .¹⁴⁶

Although Zhou Zuoren introduced the modern essay genre from the West, he, like Hu Shi, was more inclined to play a role in the Chinese Renaissance: Zhou reconstructed certain non-orthodox Chinese literary traditions instead of merely replacing them with Western literary ideas. By 1926, Zhou's affinity with the literary renaissance movement was evident in his preface to *Taoan Mengyi* (陶庵夢憶) written by Zhang Dai (1597-1684):

I often reflect that modern prose of the New Literature has been least influenced from abroad. It is the product of literary renaissance rather than literary revolution, though in the course of the development of literature renaissance and revolution are alike progress. Before Neo-Confucianism and ancient prose [*guwen*] reached the height of their influence, lyrical prose had already advanced considerably, but in the eyes of the literati naturally enjoyed little esteem . . .¹⁴⁷

Therefore, by 1932, during one of his lecture series, which was published in 1934 in the *Origins of the New Chinese Literature*, Zhou emphasized the significance of lyrical prose

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 170.

¹⁴⁶ Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (New York: The John Day Company, 1935), 240.

¹⁴⁷ Pollard, 11; Daruvala, 185.

and the expressionist tradition of the Ming Gongan school and claimed that what the Gongan school had advocated was more or less the same as Hu Shi's concepts of New Literature.¹⁴⁸ In his lecture series, Zhou was trying to link the most famous maxim of the Gongan school—uniquely express one's *xingling* (性靈 personality or innate sensibility) without being restrained by convention or form—to Hu Shi's prescription for the style of New Literature.¹⁴⁹ Zhou argues that the crucial element of modern essay writing is the author's exhibition of his or her individual *xingling* (personality), for which the Chinese non-orthodox Gongan school of the Ming dynasty already set the precedent.¹⁵⁰ Even though the precedent was set in the forms of personal letters and landscape essays, Zhou still declared the Gongan school as “the origin of modern Chinese literature.”¹⁵¹ In Zhou's mind, although the modern essay is of Western-origin, the literary theory of essay writing is both Chinese and Western.

¹⁴⁸ Daruvala, 134.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 134.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 134.

¹⁵¹ Chih-p'ing Chou, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4, 93.

As Lin Yutang mentioned in *My Country and My People*, Zhou had been greatly influenced by the literary theory of Yuan Zhonglang of the Gongan school. The intellectual origins of Zhou's literary renaissance and his promotion of the essay were indeed tied to his affinity with the Gongan notions of *xingling* (personality) and *qu* (taste). Yuan Zhonglang (1568-1610) placed the writer's *xingling* (personality or innate sensibility) at the center of literary composition and considered originality more important than formal attributes.¹⁵² Yuan was thus damned by the Ming orthodoxy for bringing about the decline of the Ming dynasty; in fact, his works, which were considered heterodox and unconventional, were banned in the Qing dynasty.¹⁵³ Because Yuan's writings flourished in Japan while they were suppressed in China, Zhou was able to utilize Japanese scholarship to help resurrect this tradition.¹⁵⁴ Since Zhou believed the essay was the best vehicle to exhibit the author's personality and taste, it is important to analyze the two notions—*xingling* (personality 性靈) and *qu* (taste 趣)—that comprised the essence of the Gongan literary ideal. Originally, Yuan Zhonglang defined *xingling* as

¹⁵² Daruvala, 134.

¹⁵³ Chou, 70.

¹⁵⁴ Diran John Sohigian, "The Life and Times of Lin Yutang" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991), 507.

the composition of three elements—historicity (史 *shi*), authenticity (真 *zhen*), and taste (

趣 *qu*); Qian Jun explains the three elements:

The positing of the theory of *xingling* was first of all an awareness of historicity that defied the eternal value of the classics The rejection of the imitators' dogmatic endeavor in the canonization of the classics becomes a precondition for the attainment of authenticity the next step, or the highest stage in achieving literary excellence is to acquire taste (*qu*).¹⁵⁵

Yuan Zhonglang elaborates upon his idea of *xingling*, especially on authenticity, with the examples of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Xunzi:

Laozi wanted to put the sages to death, and Zhuangzi ridiculed Confucius, and yet their works are still read today. Xunzi talked of innate evil, but his biography was placed alongside that of Mencius. Why? Because their views were derived from themselves without so much as a shred of reliance on any ancient person. Thus they attained their inviolable greatness. Although people of today can ridicule them, they cannot cast them away.¹⁵⁶

In echoing Yuan's view, Zhou Zuoren also points out that the origin of Chinese aesthetics drew on a natural philosophy based on the traditions of Daoist non-orthodoxy—represented by Laozi and Zhuangzi—and Confucian orthodoxy. These two traditions established two positions that enabled later aestheticians to see art as either *shi yan zhi* (詩言志 a means of personal expression) or *wen yi zai dao* (文以載道 an instrument for conveying the Confucian Way).¹⁵⁷ As we shall see, Lin Yutang later discarded the

¹⁵⁵ Jun Qian, "Lin Yutang: Negotiating Modernity Between East and West" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1996), 64-6.

¹⁵⁶ Chou, 47.

¹⁵⁷ Daruvala, 114.

Confucian aesthetics and named Laozi, Zhuangzi, and some of the Daoist followers as eminent tastemakers of China.

On the concept of *qu* (taste), however, Yuan Zhonglang was more elusive. He thought the concept of *qu* was too subtle to be definable and thus claimed that only children have the endowment of *qu*.¹⁵⁸ Because of the elusive nature and ubiquitous presence of *qu* in Ming connoisseurship, Craig Clunas dubs *qu* “the word that isn’t there,” even though it was a key value in the discussion of painting, of poetry and of personal conduct in the late Ming dynasty.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps the best way to explain the meaning of *qu* (taste) is to illuminate its relationship with *xingling* (personality). Chou Chih-p’ing eloquently explains: “*xingling* is an innate quality possessed intrinsically, while *qu* is what emanates from this innate quality. Therefore *xingling* itself is beyond perception, and what makes it perceptible is *qu*.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 144-6.

¹⁵⁹ Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (1991; repr., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 88-9.

¹⁶⁰ Chou, 53.

Qu (taste) loomed large as a literary value in Zhou Zuoren's mind because Yuan Zhonglang had placed the element of *qu* (taste) at the highest stage of literary achievement. Because of the intertwining relationship between *xingling* and *qu*, Susan Daruvala explains the way Zhou interpreted the term "taste." She suggests that like most people, Zhou defines taste as discernment of the intrinsic aesthetic categories of a literary work. However, she further explains that Zhou chooses to broaden the aesthetic categories by including *xingling* (personality) of the author as one of the aesthetic elements to be judged. Furthermore, Zhou privileges the personality of the author exhibited in the literary work over all other intrinsic aesthetic categories.¹⁶¹ Therefore, Zhou designated the genre of the personal essay, which Lin Yutang called the familiar essay, as the most suitable genre for an author to reveal his or her individual personality directly and lyrically. Zhou emphasized that the personal essay should reflect a writer's emotions or aspects of his personal life.¹⁶² Consequently, in Zhou's mind, the personal essay becomes an appropriate genre for those who believe they have "good taste."

Because of his ideological and aesthetic affinities with the personal essay, Lin Yutang started to promote aggressively the genre by launching a series of magazines in

¹⁶¹ Daruvala, 148-51.

¹⁶² Chou, 92.

the 1930s. His magazine *Ren Jian Shi* (人間世 *This Human World*) was the first magazine devoted to the genre of the personal essay. Although Zhou Zuoren had launched a weekly called *Yusi* (語絲 *Threads of Talk*) in 1924 to promote essay writing, *Yusi* ended up being a medium for the political essay rather than for the personal essay. Heeding Zhou's call to speak independently, boldly, and sincerely, many contributors, including Lu Xun and Lin Yutang, turned in mostly contentious political essays. Before the Beijing warlord government banned *Yusi* in 1927, Lin Yutang even wrote a political essay in 1925 to promote the “art of cursing”:

There are people who feel they should curse people; those who are inspired to curse, who feel the sacredness of cursing Therefore Nietzsche could not but curse modern Europeans, George Bernard Shaw curse Englishmen, and Lu Xun curse Oriental civilization I say there is nothing wrong as long as you curse right. To do it skillfully and artistically is more effective than criticism.¹⁶³

Diran John Sohigian comments, “Indeed ‘cursing’ was becoming a well-practiced art by the group of eminent men of letters at the *Yusi* club—morally sensitive, losing hope, frustrated and outraged.”¹⁶⁴ One decade later, Lin Yutang abandoned his taste for the political essay and founded several magazines to promote the original lyrical ideal of

¹⁶³ Sohigian, 329.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 332.

Zhou Zuoren's personal essay. The enthusiastic response from the literary public led the publishing circle to designate the year 1934 as the year of "the personal essay."¹⁶⁵

In fact, Lin Yutang embodies the spirit of the Gongan school because he was enchanted by their literary theory and their literary works. On the other hand, Zhou, who discovered the Gongan school, was impressed only with their literary theory but not with their literature. Zhou was only impressed with their literary ideals of *xingling* and *qu* but not with the transparency of the Gongan writing style.¹⁶⁶ Chen Pingyuan observes that Lin Yutang, rather than Zhou Zuoren, was the one who inherited the mantle of the Gongan school. Chen opines that Zhou's writing style was too mild and calm for Gongan's carefree and unconventional taste.¹⁶⁷ By the mid-1930s, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Lin Yutang, Zhu Zhiqing, and Zeng Pu all pronounced the essay as the crown achievement of all New Literature.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Literary Trends I*, 447.

¹⁶⁶ Sohigian, 152.

¹⁶⁷ Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu zhi jianli: yi Zhang Taiyan, Hu Shi wei zhongxin* (中國現代學術之建立：以章太炎、胡適為中心 *The Formation of Modern Chinese Scholarship with Emphasis on Zhang Taiyan and Hu Shi*) (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2000), 343.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.

II. Importing a Western Theory on Literary “Good Taste”

When Lin Yutang arrived at Harvard in 1919, it was during a period known in American intellectual history as “The Battle of the Books” (1910-1925), which was a debate between the “moralists” and “expressionists” about whether literary criticism should be associated with a moral standard.¹⁶⁹ Joel Elias Spingarn, formerly of Columbia University, in refuting Irving Babbitt, argued that there should be no standard of judgment beyond individual taste to determine whether the poet has expressed himself or herself well.¹⁷⁰ Poets do not really write epics, pastorals, and lyrics—they express only themselves, and the expression is their only form.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, technique is personality—which the artist cannot teach nor the pupil can learn but the aesthetic critic can understand.¹⁷² Therefore, the unity of genius (personality of the artist) and taste (of the critic) should be the final achievement of modern criticism.¹⁷³ Spingarn explains, “It

¹⁶⁹ Sohigian, 238.

¹⁷⁰ J. E. Spingarn et al., *Criticism in America: Its Function and Status* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924), 32.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 43.

is not the inherent function of poetry to further any moral or social cause, any more than it is the function of bridge-building to further the cause of Esperanto.”¹⁷⁴ “Stressing individual genius, taste, and expression, Spingarn assigned no role to the influence of inherited cultural traditions in examining literature.”¹⁷⁵ Although Spingarn disparages the role of morality in literary criticism, he does emphasize, “back of any philosophy of art there must be a philosophy of life, and all aesthetic formulae seem empty unless there is richness of content behind them.”¹⁷⁶ In other words, art should not be censored by morality even though it is not independent of morality.

Although the notions of “expressionism,” “personality,” and “taste” in Spingarn’s theory are very similar to Yuan Zhonglang’s notions of *xingling* (personality or self-expression) and *qu* (taste), Lin Yutang had not learned about the Gongan school in 1928. Lin was only interested in importing Spingarn’s theoretical equation of artistic expressionism to good taste. China in the early 20th century had yet to develop an expressionist writing style, let alone modern literary criticism. The excessive rigid and moralistic tone, hardly considered “good taste” by modern standard, was still adopted

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 33-4.

¹⁷⁵ Sohigian, 253.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 292.

ubiquitously in Chinese composition. As we will see later, Lin took Spingarn's ideas about the importance of taste in the role of literature and in the role of philosophy of life very seriously. For the time being, Lin's goal was to carry on the "Battle of the Books" on behalf of Spingarn in China to curb Confucian "panmoralism" by introducing literary expressionism to China so as to advance one of the New Literature ideals—the emancipation of the individual from literary bondage. It was important for Lin to curb Confucian panmoralism because it was pervasive throughout China. Even Wei Zhengtong, a Confucian partisan, criticized *ruxue* (儒學 Confucian learning) for its dominant "panmoralism" (*fandaodezhuyi* 泛道德主義):

It oversteps and exaggerates the proper status of moral consciousness, letting it invade other cultural domains (such as literature, politics, and economics), taking on the role of master, and forcing the basic nature of these other cultural domains to take on a very secondary status. As its ultimate goal, it seeks to transform different forms of cultural expression into the service of morality to serve as tools for the expression of morality.¹⁷⁷

What Wei said was certainly true for Republican China. To illustrate the dire situation of panmoralism in China, Lin Yutang describes:

When a magazine editor wants an article on the danger or security of flying in its present stage of development and goes to the head of an aviation department for the material, the head of the department would never write it himself, but will delegate the job to one of his secretaries who is distinguished for his literary style. And the secretary would then write a moralistic essay on the

¹⁷⁷ Makeham, 236.

importance of aviation in the cause of the salvation of the country, beginning with the jejune line:
 “Aviation is the most important industry in the salvation of the country.”¹⁷⁸

Lin Yutang wrote the above description in 1936, almost two decades after the literary revolution. Obviously, the introduction of vernacular language did not help to eradicate the deep-seated Chinese moralistic tradition.

The reason it was hard to eradicate the pervasive influence of the Confucian moralistic tradition is that by the late 1920's, the newly conceived Nationalist government began to resurrect a Confucian cultural-moral order. In addition to this state-engineered re-emergence of Confucian moral orthodoxy, communist moral orthodoxy was beginning to emerge within the intellectual circle. Chow Tse-tsung points out that the New Culture ideal of emancipation of the individual from tradition was predestined to be overwhelmed by the primacy of a strong state to defend foreign and warlord encroachments. In addition, Marxist-Leninist preaching of liberation of the impoverished classes and colonies provided moral justification for the conceptions of mass movement, propaganda, organization, and revolutionary discipline.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936), 159-60.

¹⁷⁹ Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 360-1.

Concurrently, New Humanism, the counterpart of Confucian humanism advocated by *The Critical Review* group, resurfaced again in 1929 under the aegis of Babbitt's most eloquent Chinese sympathizer—Liang Shiqiu. Hou Chien notes that Liang, who single-handedly translated the complete works of Shakespeare into vernacular Chinese, could argue so cogently “that henceforth Chinese Literary historians all accepted his analysis even when they demurred from his negative conclusions about Romanticism.”¹⁸⁰ Although Babbitt never said plainly what literature is, Liang's view of great literature was quite similar to Babbitt's overall classicist view—that it “tends to express not the self, but a universal human nature in ways that are composed, unambiguous, and disciplined.”¹⁸¹ In 1929, with the help of Wu Mi, Liang wrote a short introduction and published *Babbitt and Humanism*, a volume of translated essays of Babbitt and articles written by *Xueheng* (*The Critical Review*) on New Humanism. The book's first edition of 2,000 copies was sold out and went through a second printing in 1931.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Hou Chien, “Irving Babbitt in China” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1980), 191.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 192.

Lin Yutang was not blind to these ominous signs of the re-emergence of the moral orthodoxy. The reaction of the American liberal intellectuals toward Babbitt's New Humanist credo, with its emphasis on "judicious imitation," "discipline," "restraint," "standards," and "higher wisdom," certainly did not escape Lin's attention.¹⁸³ Just as his American counterparts looked upon New Humanism as Calvinistic Puritan moralism, the enemy of individual expression, Lin looked upon Calvinism as *lixue* (理學 the School of Principle) of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and called it the "Occidental *lixue*."¹⁸⁴ To Lin, the re-emergence of literary moralism in three brands—Confucian moralism, Marxian moralism, and New Humanist moralism—was the coming of a massive assault on literary individualism and self-expressionism.

To combat the tripartite literary moralism, Lin published *New Literary Criticism*, a volume of translations that includes Spingarn's historic 1910 lecture on the "New Criticism," right before the release of Liang's *Babbitt and Humanism*. Spingarn coined the phrase "New Criticism" and asserted that the function of literary criticism is to evaluate the intrinsic expressivity of the art object without being subject to extrinsic matters such as morality, biography, history, politics, economics, and etc. Spingarn's

¹⁸³ Sohigian, 251.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 257.

“New Criticism,” basically an American movement of anti-panmoralism, provides the name for the critical movement that would dominate literary analysis from the 1930s to the 1960s. In his translated volume, Lin defended Spingarn by translating literary criticisms of prominent expressionists such as Benedetto Croce, Oscar Wilde, E. Dowden, and Van Wyck Brooks. He also wrote an introduction defining the battle lines between Babbitt and Spingarn. Lin pronounces Spingarn as the most distinguished new theorist and urges readers to compare Spingarn with Babbitt when Liang’s book on Babbitt is released.¹⁸⁵

Lin Yutang probably realized that it would take more than just a relatively new American literary theory to combat literary moralism in China. Therefore, he founded *The Analects Fortnightly* in late 1932 to advocate a humorous style of writing to forestall the repressive and moralistic literary trends. Fortunately, at about the same time, Zhou Zuoren gave a systematic introduction of Yuan Zhonglang and Yuan’s theory of *xingling*. Lin was so overjoyed that he even composed a couplet for this event as part of his birthday poem for his 40th birthday:

Lately I have known Yuan Zhonglang

¹⁸⁵ A. Owen Aldridge, “Irving Babbitt and Lin Yutang,” *Modern Age* 41, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 319-20.

My ecstasy turned into a wild roar! ¹⁸⁶

The reason for Lin's rapture was because he had been searching in vain for a counterpart in China so that he could legitimize Spingarn's theory of expressionism. Lin once wrote, "one must fetch a Chinese ancestor for the modern personal essay so that the genre may take roots."¹⁸⁷ Now that he had found many literary examples of good taste—expressionism, humor, and leisurely attitude—in the writings of the indigenous Gong'an school, Lin could legitimize his literary campaign by linking the Gong'an school with Spingarn's theory. Thus, in his Chinese treatise "On Literature" (論文 *Lun Wen*), Lin announces, "Yuan Zhonglang's *xingling* school and the Western expressionist criticism have both arrived at the same insight from different historical and cultural backgrounds concerning literary creation."¹⁸⁸ Lin further explains the *xingling* school, which he translated as the School of Self-Expression, to his English readers as follows:

The School of Self-Expression demands that we express in writing only our thoughts and feelings, our genuine loves, genuine hatreds, genuine fears and genuine hobbies The dangers of this school are that a writer's style may differ violently from those of established authorities. That is why the School of Self-Expression was so hated by the Confucian critics. But as a matter of fact,

¹⁸⁶ Guo Jifang 郭濟訪, *Youmo Dashi Lin Yutang* (幽默大師林語堂 Lin Yutang, Master of Humor) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1994), 115-6.

¹⁸⁷ Shen Yongbao 沈永寶, ed. *Lin Yutang piping wenji* (林語堂批評文集 A Collection of Lin Yutang's Critical Essays) (Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 1998), 164.

¹⁸⁸ Qian, 80.

it is these original writers who saved Chinese thought and literature from absolute uniformity and death Chinese orthodox literature expressly aimed at expressing the minds of the sages and not the minds of the authors and was therefore dead; the *xingling* school of literature aims at expressing the minds of the authors and not the minds of the sages and is therefore alive.¹⁸⁹

For his remaining years in China until 1935, Lin conducted a literary campaign for restoring the School of Self-Expression or the *xingling* school by writing not only numerous lively personal essays but also theoretical essays on literature and the art of writing.

III. Importing a Western Literary Style of “Good Taste”—Humor

The term *youmo*—the Chinese neologism to the English word “humor”—did not exist in China until Lin Yutang first coined the term in 1924 to promote the Western concept of humor in China. Lin explains that Chinese humor is more in deeds than in words because the “unholy awe in Confucianism” made the presentation of novel ideas taboo. Lin reasons that because humor is intrinsically individualistic and idiosyncratic, it is clear that literary humor is not permitted to thrive in a restrictive sociopolitical environment.¹⁹⁰ Echoing Lin’s explanation, George Kao comments:

¹⁸⁹ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living* (1937; repr., New York: William Morrow, 1996), 392-3.

¹⁹⁰ Lin, *My Country*, 68.

By common consent, as a matter of fact, the Chinese have for centuries assigned a definite time and place for humor in literature. It is, to put it negatively, not to be admitted in the Hall of Great and Good Taste. Since the Chinese conception of good government and the good society is based on rules by scholars, literature itself has been straitjacketed to include nothing but formalized and dehydrated essays and verses.¹⁹¹

What the Chinese have been practicing is really *huaqi* (滑稽 joking) in daily life and *fengci* (諷刺 satire) in the literary sphere. Tang Zhesheng, who wrote *A Brief History of Modern Chinese Huaqi Literature*, explains the term *huaqi* was first applied to court jesters in ancient times. In the old days, *huaqi* had two connotations: jesting performed by socially inferior people and jesting for serious purposes. These two contradictory aspects of *huaqi* later split into two denotations: frivolous jesting performed by the lower class and social satire employed by high-minded scholars for serious purposes.¹⁹²

Louis Cazamian, however, defines English humor as a verbal or written expression with a certain twist to exhibit a nonconformist disposition that defies what is customarily regarded as appropriate. The practitioner of humor is seen as an ingenious artist who provides aesthetic enjoyment, psychological stimulus, and intellectual

¹⁹¹ George Kao, eds., editor's preface to *Chinese Wit & Humor* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1946), xviii.

¹⁹² Wendi Chen, "The reception of George Bernard Shaw in China, 1918-1996" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1999), 138.

enrichment. Therefore, English humor suggests an individualistic and uncommon character that carries no derogatory overtone as the Chinese terms do.¹⁹³

When Kao was commissioned to compile a book of Chinese wit and humor, he expressed his misgivings about the laugh-provoking potential of his selections because “humor is so much a part of the Chinese people but so little a part of Chinese literature.”¹⁹⁴ In his preface to *Chinese Wit and Humor*, he cautions American readers that “what appears funniest to the Chinese is often times (1) outside the realm of writing, (2) untranslatable even if in writing, and (3) unfunny to the Westerners even if translated.”¹⁹⁵

Lin Yutang’s motives for introducing humor into China were threefold. First, he wanted both humor and *xingling* (personality) to be the dual antidote to Confucian orthodox moralism, “the demonic enemy of humor.”¹⁹⁶ Second, he wanted to show the Chinese the difference between humor and satire to facilitate his induction of humor into

¹⁹³ Ibid., 139-40.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., xxvi.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., xxvi.

¹⁹⁶ Shen, 73.

the “Hall of Great and Good Taste.” Third, he wanted to redefine the concept of Western humor to include philosophical humor so as to reflect the meaning of humor in a Chinese cultural context. In his campaign to vitiate Confucian moralism, like the promoters of the vernacular language who cited the vernacular novel as the legitimate Chinese literature, Lin also cited the vernacular novel as the legitimate source of Chinese literary humor. In addition, he also emphasized the humor in the literature of Gongan school to buttress his campaign.

While Zhou Zuoren was enamored of the literary theory of the Gongan school, he had misgivings about the style of their prose-writing. As Chen Pingyuan indicated, Lin Yutang was the one who animated the humorous and carefree style of Yuan Zhonglang’s prose-writing. In his treatise titled “On Humor” (論幽默 *Lun youmo*), Lin declares:

Genuine humor could not have come from the scholar-officials. Only among the writers of the School of *xingling* (the School of Self-Expression) such as [Gong] Dingan, [Yuan] Zhonglang, or [Yuan] Zicai [aka Yuan Mei] do we find some very humorous literature. But if we look outside the pale of orthodox literature, in the literature regarded by the scholar-officials as contemptible fiction . . . there is always some humor Because orthodox literature does not allow humor, the Chinese do not understand the nature of humor and its function . . .¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Lin Yutang 林語堂, *Lin Yutang Xuanji* (林語堂選集 The Selected Works of Lin Yutang) (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenxue yanjiushe, 19--?), 40-1. I have borrowed most of the translated text from Sohigian, 498.

To popularize humor and to legitimize indigenous humorous literature, Lin, with Liu Dajie in 1934, published the complete works of Yuan Zhonglang; consequently, the study of Yuan Zhonglang reached a peak after almost three hundred years of suppression of his works.¹⁹⁸ Chou Chih-p'ing also opines that Yuan's sense of humor and magnetic personality are unique among his peers in late Ming.¹⁹⁹ Yuan's humorous personality is clearly expressed in the following letter:

I know that members of our society are making great progress. I think you are all like ginseng and licorice, which are the purest of all medicines. As for myself, I am croton and rhubarb. When people feel stuffed full, I can somehow relieve them.²⁰⁰

Croton and rhubarb were believed to be the most effective herbs for the relief of constipation. Chou explains that Yuan's remark insinuated that his literary theories could have a cathartic effect on those who were 'stuffed' with archaic expressions.²⁰¹

Yuan Mei (1716-1797), the most popular Qing poet who held similar literary theories to those of the *xingling* school, was Lin Yutang's second favorite Chinese humorous writer. While Zhou Zuoren did not think Yuan Mei exhibited good taste in the

¹⁹⁸ Chou, 146.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 100-2.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 101.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 101.

artistry of his poetry or daily consumption habit, Lin was fascinated with Yuan's wit and humor.²⁰² Arthur Waley believes Yuan Mei undoubtedly had a streak of impishness and impudence that made him enjoy shocking people. Yuan seems to be unique among peers in his persistence in publishing humorous poems and writings about concubines and young actors.²⁰³ Zhang Xuecheng, an esteemed essayist and philosopher of Yuan Mei's time, gained fame for his vehement invectives against Yuan's character and his unconventional use of poetry and Confucian texts.²⁰⁴ Coincidentally, like Yuan Zhonglang, Yuan Mei also employed ginseng to express his sympathetic humorous sentiment. In his poem titled "Ginseng," Yuan Mei writes:

I love a good logical chat about ethics, but I won't sit still for a sermon.
Purple Mountain Ginseng's best—it works, and it doesn't taste so bad.²⁰⁵

Being a habitual nonconformist exhibitionist, Yuan Mei was always living on the edge of the deadly Literary Inquisition of the Qing dynasty.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Daruvala, 147-9, 157.

²⁰³ Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei: Eighteenth Century Chinese Poet* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd, 1956), 203-4.

²⁰⁴ David S. Nivison, *The Life and Thoughts of Chang Hsueh-cheng, 1738-1801* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 264.

²⁰⁵ Yuan Mei, *I Don't Bow to Buddhas: Selected Poems of Yuan Mei*, trans. J. P. Seaton (Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1997), 70.

Lin Yutang's launching of *The Analects Fortnightly* (論語 *Lunyu*) arrived like "a live cinder that flitted its way toward the gasoline fumes, the contagion of laughter spread across China in 1933, which was declared the Year of Humor."²⁰⁷ The "Master of Humor" of China, however, earned the hearty contempt of the communists and left-wing writers, who usually employed satire to criticize social and political injustices. To the radical revolutionary writers, the subtlety of humor, which lacks descriptive utility and ideological clarity, was only diluting the revolutionary zeal of the public. In fact, the Chinese traditional dual concept of humor as either frivolous or utilitarian was so steeped that the Chinese viewed Bernard Shaw as either the master of *hauji* (jokes) or the master of *fenci* (satire). When Bernard Shaw visited Shanghai in 1933, he was received enthusiastically because the intellectuals there equated Shavian humor with critical satire. An anonymous writer expressed his great hope that Shaw's coming to China will inevitably teach Chinese youth how to swear because public officials in China certainly deserve a good scolding.²⁰⁸ When Shaw went to Beijing afterward, he received a cold

²⁰⁶ Waley, 64, 203.

²⁰⁷ Diran John Sohigian, "Contagion of Laughter: The Rise of the Humor Phenomenon in Shanghai in the 1930s," *Position* 15, no.1 (Spring 2007): 137.

²⁰⁸ Wendi Chen, 146-9.

reception because the educational and literary circles perceived him as a joker, a profession that is not on par with the intellectual stature of John Dewey or Bertrand Russell.²⁰⁹ Lin was perceptive to notice that the Chinese public was totally oblivious to the intrinsic meaning of Western humor. Therefore, he made an earnest effort to explicate the difference between humor and satire in “On Humor”:

Abusive laughter is selfish; humor is sympathetic—thus humor and satiric attack are not the same. Satiric attack is deficient in the subtle perceptions of reason; it is not self-reflective Humor comes about when the mind is perceptive when some principle is grasped Those who attack are desperate, their words heated. They fear those who will not sympathize with them. Humorists understand that the wise naturally share the same feelings. They don’t waste their energy on scathing insults; obsessed with wiping out enemies Because the influence of the traditional orthodoxy is indeed great, humor is generally looked down upon as flippant, frivolous, and ridiculing. Indeed, humor and satire are often near to each other—but humor’s objective is not to ridicule.²¹⁰

In spite of his effort, the communists were still “howling that Lin Yutang, by preaching humor, was ruining the country.”²¹¹ While Lin was promoting Western literary humor as a literary style of good taste to the unconvinced communists, he also sought to expand the domain of humor from the literary sphere to the philosophical sphere to better reflect the meaning of humor in a Chinese cultural context.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 152.

²¹⁰ Sohigian, “The Life and Times,” 502-3.

²¹¹ Kao, xxxi.

Lin Yutang assigned the two Chinese characters “*you mo*” (幽默) to create the Chinese neologism for “humor.” The two characters represent an acronym for Lin’s personal definition of humor—tacit understanding with a serene and detached attitude. At the time in 1924, Lin was too busy attacking Confucian moralism in his two short treatises on humor and did not elaborate on his definition of humor. Instead, he told his readers that humor is recognizable but not describable and referred his readers to read George Meredith’s “Essay on Comedy.”²¹² By 1934, Lin was ready to expound on how his definition of humor correlates to the Chinese cultural tradition.

To begin his long Chinese treatise “On Humor” (論幽默 *Lun youmo*), Lin wrote Meredith’s statement from “Essay on Comedy” in English: “One excellent test of the civilization of a country I take to be the flourishing of the comic idea; and the test of true comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter.”²¹³ Although Lin did not translate “Essay on Comedy” in its entirety, he had surely read the section on which Meredith used

²¹² In 1924, Lin Yutang published two short essays on the topic of humor—“Zhengyi sanwen bing tichang youmo” (征譯散文并提倡幽默 Request for an Essay Translation and Advocacy of Humor) and “Youmo zahua” (幽默雜話 Miscellaneous Talks on Humor)—in *Chenbao Literary Supplement* on May 23, 1924 and June 9, 1924 respectively. See Shen Yongbao, 6-12. Lin Yutang mentioned George Meredith’s “Essay on Comedy” in his second essay. See Shen, 8.

²¹³ Lin, *Lin Yutang Xuanji*, 36.

comic spirit to discourse on international cultural hierarchy. In the Meredithian prescription, Moliere and the French rank at the top, the English second, the German third, the people to the further East rank even lower because of a “total silence of comedy.”²¹⁴ Therefore, according to Qian Jun, Lin’s promotion of humor was also motivated by a nationalist consideration to defy China’s low international cultural hierarchical ranking informed by the Western interpretation of humor.²¹⁵ In his treatise “On Humor,” Lin sought to expand the domain of humor from the literary and dramatic spheres to the philosophical sphere. By reinterpreting the meaning of humor in a Chinese cultural context and in the philosophical sphere, Lin could implicitly place China back on top of the international cultural hierarchical ranking game.

Although Lin never expressed his interpretation of humor as a nationalistic agenda, the timing of his meeting with Pearl Buck and the publication of “On Humor” is quite revealing. According to Lin Taiyi, Lin’s second daughter, Lin spent the first ten months of 1934 writing *My Country and My People*, which includes a section on Chinese

²¹⁴ Qian, 106.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 106-7.

humor, after being commissioned in 1933 by Pearl Buck and Richard Walsh.²¹⁶ The publication dates of his three-part treatise “On Humor,” published in Shanghai between January 16, 1934 and February 16, 1934 indicate that he was thoroughly aware that he was addressing the issue of Chinese humor simultaneously to the Chinese and to the world.²¹⁷ Therefore, his exposition on Chinese humor, although in a greatly reduced format, in *My Country and My People* was in congruence with his Chinese treatise “On Humor.”

Lin reinterprets Chinese humor as the philosophical humor of the Daoist school represented by Laozi and Zhuangzi. Lin singles out the Daoist sense of detachment as the most crucial element of Chinese humor. This sense of detachment enables the Chinese to view evil and tragedy from a comic perspective. Therefore, Daoist humorists laugh at evil and tragedy instead of condemning it or bemoaning it. Moreover, Daoist humorists delight in recounting their own failures and embarrassments. Lin had always

²¹⁶ Lin Taiyi 林太乙, *Lin Yutang zhuan* (林語堂傳 A Biography of Lin Yutang) (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1989), 127-8.

²¹⁷ For the publishing dates of Lin Yutang’s 3-part treatise “On Humor,” see Shen Yongbao, 65. Shen’s edition of the treatise is abridged: Part One is shortened and Part Two is missing. For the complete version of “On Humor,” please refer to *Lin Yutang Xuanji*, 36-49.

been delighted to cite the following poem written by Tao Yuanming (365-427) as an example of Daoist humor:

My temples are grey, my muscles no longer full.
 Five sons have I, and none of them likes school.
 Ah-shu is sixteen and as lazy as lazy can be.
 Ah-hsuan is fifteen and no taste for reading has he.
 Thirteen are Yung and Tuan, yet they can't tell six from seven.
 A-t'ung wants only pears and chestnuts—in two years he'll be eleven.
 Then, come! Let me empty this cup, if such be the will of Heaven.²¹⁸

Tao's elegant expression of detachment and resignation on unworthy sons is still unsurpassed. In essence, humor in the Chinese cultural context represents a way of looking at life rather than an aesthetic enjoyment or intellectual enrichment as in the Western cultural context. Through his reinterpretation, Lin was able to be faithful to his neologism of humor and to posit China as a civilization of good taste—a civilization that possesses a tradition of comic spirit more akin to the tradition of Omar Khayyam of Persia than to the configuration prescribed by Meredith.²¹⁹

IV. Exporting Chinese Traditions of “Good Taste”—Chinese Non-orthodox Aesthetics

Meredith's discourse on comic spirit and culture in 1897 was not unrelated to

²¹⁸ Lin, *My Country*, 68.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 66-8.

what Akira Iriye described as the Western habitual linkage of culture to race in cultural internationalism of the early 20th century. I would argue that Meredith had unconsciously included comic spirit as one additional aesthetic domain of “high” culture to buttress the glass ceiling of symmetrical cultural internationalism. The conscious or unconscious desire of a certain group to link art and culture can be succinctly explicated by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of taste and social distinction. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) developed the theory to explain a sociological pattern of France in the 1970’s. Bourdieu argues that art and cultural consumption are utilized, consciously or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.²²⁰ “Tastes (i.e. manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference.”²²¹ Bourdieu further explains:

It is no accident that, when they [tastes] have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes This means that the games of artists and aesthetes and their struggles for the monopoly of artistic legitimacy are less innocent than they seem. At stake in every struggle over art there is also the imposition of an art of living, that is, the transmutation of an arbitrary way of living into the legitimate way of life which casts every other way of living into arbitrariness.²²²

²²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 7.

²²¹ Ibid., 56.

²²² Ibid., 56-7.

Although Bourdieu's analysis of taste targets sociological determinism in France, his analysis speaks great volumes in the field of cultural internationalism in which the non-West was deemed as an inferior class because of perceived inferior taste. In essence, taste in the sociological sense that distinguishes one's class standing in an intra-national social context can also be applied to the inter-national social context.

Based on Lin Yutang's response, which I have already described in the last section, to the relationship between comic spirit and culture posed by Meredith, we can conclude that Lin was not insensitive to the role of "taste" in the international cultural game. His sensitivity was quite evident when he asserts in *My Country and My People* that: "The abysmal ignorance of the foreigner about China and the Chinese cannot be more impressive than when he asks the question: Do the Chinese have a sense of humor? It is really as surprising as if an Arab caravan were to ask: Are there sands in the Sahara desert?"²²³ Lin's sensitive reaction or overreaction can be attributed to his awareness of the stake of the symmetrical cultural internationalism game—the presentation of the Chinese player as a cultural equal of other Western players in the midst of the Chinese

²²³ Lin, *My Country*, 66-7.

Exclusion Act. Therefore, exporting an image of China with excellent taste in aesthetics is also a struggle for artistic legitimacy among a world of nations.

My Country was thought to be “the truest, the most profound, the most complete, the most important book yet written about China” by both Pearl Buck and Ha Jin. In all fairness, Lin Yutang did accomplish his objective of showing “both sides of the picture: the benefits of the teachings of the old civilization as well as the dangers resulting from them” as described by *The New York Times* critic R. Emmet Kennedy.²²⁴ But when it comes to the chapter on “The Artistic Life,” Lin unabashedly declares, “I think of all phases of the Chinese civilization, Chinese art alone will make a lasting contribution to the culture of the world. This point, I think will not be seriously contested.”²²⁵ After Lin poured his heart and soul in writing this chapter, his labor of love was recognized at least by Chan Wing-tsit. Chan, after much criticism of Lin’s overemphasis on Daoism,

²²⁴ R. Emmet Kennedy, “The East Speaks to the West: A Chinese Writer’s Fine Interpretation of His Country’s Ancient Culture” *New York Times* (1857-Current file), December 8, 1935, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 6, 2009)

²²⁵ Lin, *My Country*, 287.

conceded that Lin's essays on Chinese artistic life and calligraphy were the best ever written on the subjects.²²⁶

"The Art of Living," the final chapter of *My Country*, is supposedly the most fascinating chapter of the entire book according to R. Emmet Kennedy and the publisher Richard Walsh. The art of living, according to Pierre Bourdieu, is the highest stake in the game of taste.²²⁷ As I mentioned before, Spingarn also recognizes that a philosophy of life is the epitome of a philosophy of art. Knowing what was at stake, Lin Yutang boldly declares:

For the Chinese have always had geniality, joviality, taste, and finesse In China, man knows a great deal about the art of all arts, viz., the art of living. A younger civilization may be keen on making progress, but an old civilization, having seen naturally a great deal of life, is keen only on living Any nation, therefore, that does not know how to eat and enjoy living like the Chinese is uncouth and uncivilized in our eyes The French eat enthusiastically, while the English eat apologetically. The Chinese national genius decidedly leans toward the French in the matter of feeding ourselves . . .²²⁸

Since France had been singled out by Meredith as a nation of supreme good taste, Lin habitually aligned China with France in the cultural hierarchy for his next book.²²⁹

²²⁶ Chan Wing-tsit, "Lin Yutang, Critic and Interpreter," *The English Journal* 36, no. 1 (January 1947): 4.

²²⁷ Bourdieu, 57.

²²⁸ Lin, *My Country*, 323, 325, 337.

²²⁹ Lin, *The Importance of Living*, 7, 148.

Although the factors of success for *My Country* were described previously by Pearl Buck and Ha Jin, I think the success of the book is also attributed to the author's unparalleled wit and boldness, which have not been matched by another bilingual writer of Chinese origin. In the prologue of *My Country*, Lin explains the methodology of his book in the following manner:

He sometimes thinks of himself as a pig, and the Westerner as a dog, and the dog worries the pig, but the pig only grunts, and it may even be a grunt of satisfaction. Why, he even wants to be a pig, a real pig, for it is really so very comfortable, and he does not envy the dog for his collar and his dog-efficiency and his bitch-goddess success. All he wants is that the dog leave him alone. That is how it is with the modern Chinese as he surveys Eastern and Western culture. It is the only way in which the Eastern culture should be surveyed and understood.²³⁰

Apparently Lin's "dog-readers" had a big and humorous heart, for he was invited back to write *The Importance of Living*, an elaboration of the short chapter on the Chinese art of living in *My Country*. Thus, Lin Yutang was ready to mobilize a host of non-orthodox aesthetes to export the art of living—the art of all arts—as understood by both Pierre Bourdieu and J. E. Spingarn.

The Importance of Living was the number one U.S. national bestseller in 1938 and is also Lin's only book that has been continuously in print. His twenty-eight other works of English fiction and non-fiction have been either sporadically or permanently out-of-

²³⁰ Lin, *My Country*, 15.

print in the U.S. Thus, *The Importance of Living*, which has been translated into 15 languages, is Lin's most lasting contribution to the world. Although "The Art of Living" constitutes a very short chapter in *My Country and My People*, it generated such great public reaction that Lin's publisher requested that he write the sequel, *The Importance of Living*. The book still fascinates the world today evidenced by its high sales ranking.²³¹

In his book, Lin captures the spiritual and materialistic aspects—informed by Daoist detachment and late-Ming hedonism—of the Chinese art of living. What is so unique about his book is that in addition to presenting his theories, Lin also furnishes ample illustrations so that his book can be read as a popular philosophical treatise and a manual for daily living. Most importantly, Lin takes great pain to emphasize the egalitarian nature of the Chinese art of living. To his more spiritually-inclined readers, Lin invokes the Daoist notion of detachment to explain the guiding principle of the Chinese art of living:

They [Daoist romanticists] had an intense love of life which showed itself in their abhorrence of all official life and a stern refusal to make the soul serf to the body. The idle life, so far from being the prerogative of the rich and powerful and successful, was in China an achievement of highmindedness This highmindedness came from, and was inevitably associated with, a

²³¹ According to amazon.com on April 4, 2009, the sales rank of *The Importance of Living* is 36,068 and the sales rank of the book under the category of philosophy-humanism is number nine, just one rank below *Montaigne's Essays*. Coincidentally, Montaigne, who was known for popularizing the essay as a literary genre in the 16th century France, was Lin Yutang's most admired pre-modern Western essayist.

certain sense of detachment toward the drama of life; it came from the quality of being able to see through life's ambitions and follies and the temptations of fame and wealth Inevitably he was a man with great simplicity of living and a proud contempt for worldly success as the world understands it.²³²

To illustrate the “Daoist cult of the idle life and rebellion against Confucianism,” Lin gives a lengthy and animated account on how Tao Yuanming was able to achieve a life of happiness and simplicity in midst of poverty.²³³ Tao Yuanming (365-427) has been the most admired scholar-official in Chinese history because he had the courage to quit his post rather than entertain a visiting inspector, objecting, “How could I bend my waist to this village buffoon for five pecks of rice!” Tao died a carefree and humble peasant-poet who left a small volume of poems on the pastoral life that is tinged with Daoist sentiments and his enjoyment of books, music, and wine.²³⁴ Because of Tao's love of life in spite of his humble circumstance, Lin singles out Tao as a genius whose “combination of devotion to the flesh and arrogance of the spirit, of spirituality without asceticism and materialism without sensuality” has yet been surpassed.²³⁵

²³² Lin, *The Importance of Living*, 152.

²³³ Ibid., 115.

²³⁴ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 100.

²³⁵ Lin, *The Importance of Living*, 115, 118.

For his more materialistically-inclined readers, Lin presents the more hedonistic side of the Chinese art of living. To support his thesis of Chinese egalitarian hedonism, Lin mobilizes a host of the late Ming and early Qing hedonist-elite, including Yuan Zhonglang, who prided themselves on excellent and inexpensive taste in the art of living. For his book chapters on “The Feast of Life,” “The Importance of Loafing,” “The Enjoyment of the Home,” “The Enjoyment of Living,” “The Enjoyment of Nature,” and “The Enjoyment of Travel” in *The Importance of Living*, Lin translates portions of almost all treatises written in late Ming or early Qing on the above topics. In fact, Lin’s book is practically the modern version of *Xianqing ouji*, a treatise on the art of living written by Li Yu of the late Ming dynasty. The ubiquitous treatises on art and the art of living during the late Ming dynasty prompted Craig Clunas to draw a Bourdieuan conclusion that the late Ming hedonist-elite were also employing “taste” to defend their social standing against the ever-expanding nouveau riche class.²³⁶ Since Lin Yutang adopts not only the content, format, style, and texts from *Xianqing ouji* but also the aesthetic principles of the book for *The Importance of Living*, I will discuss the background of this fascinating book—*Xianqing ouji*.

²³⁶ Clunas, preface to *Superfluous Things*, xii-xvi; 169-172.

Xianqing ouji (閒情偶寄 Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling), which was translated by Lin Yutang as *Art of Living*, was written by Li Yu (also known as Li Liweng). Li Yu (1611-1680), a famous playwright, novelist, and essayist born in the late Ming dynasty and died in the early Qing dynasty, published *Xianqing* in 1671. *Xianqing* is a book of lively personal essays divided into three parts. The first part contains his dramatic theory, the second part focuses on women, and the last and the largest part explores the art of living.²³⁷ The last part includes topics on houses, horticulture and gardening, furniture and *objets d'art*, food and drink, flowers and trees, health and pleasure. Patrick Hanan declares the book one-of-a-kind among Chinese literature and foreign literature.²³⁸ Impressed by the hedonist nature of the book, Nathan Mao describes Li Yu's view of life as closer to the classic Cyrenaic, Epicurean, and Utilitarian philosophies than to Daoist renunciation of life and society.²³⁹ Even though Li Yu considered the book his best hope for immortality, this book, along with many of his

²³⁷ Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture, and Modernity in Li Yu's World* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 279.

²³⁸ Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988), 28.

²³⁹ Nathan K. Mao and Liu Ts'un-yan, *Li Yu* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 22.

works that were considered heterodox, was destroyed posthumously and during the Literary Inquisition under Qianlong's emperorship.²⁴⁰ However, just like the fate of Yuan Zhonglong's works, Li Yu's works found great favor in Tokugawa Japan and by Lin Yutang, who regarded late Ming self-expressionism, humorism, and hedonism as Chinese non-orthodox aesthetics *par excellence*.²⁴¹

Although the hedonist philosophy of Li Yu is in great contrast to Tao Yuanming's austere cult of idle life, Li Yu did assign two Daoist guiding principles for *Xianqing*—simplicity and frugality.²⁴² Li Yu argues that it does not matter whether an art is major or minor, all that matters is that the art be capable of being refined.²⁴³ His book was dedicated to show that even the lowliest arts and activities can be endlessly refined; therefore, his book does not deal with subjects of aesthetic appreciation that involve great cost. For him, it is not an object's rarity or the cost of its material that makes it valuable, but the object's practical usefulness and artistic quality.²⁴⁴ Li Yu treats simplicity as an

²⁴⁰ Chang and Chang, 329-30.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 15-18.

²⁴² Hanan, 74.

²⁴³ Ibid., 63.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 198

aesthetic value in terms of tasteful understatement and argues that simple and artistic pleasures could be found in sleeping, sitting, walking, standing, drinking, eating, talking, bathing, listening to music, watching people play chess, looking at flowers, birds, and fish, watering bamboo, and even performing the unmentionable.²⁴⁵ Therefore, Li Yu's treatise on the art of living, just like Lin's *The Importance of Living*, dealt with the above subject matters section by section. Lin quoted the following passage from Li Yu's essay on "crabs" to show how simplicity and frugality were performed in Li Yu's art of living:

There is nothing in food and drink whose flavor I cannot describe with the utmost understanding and imagination. But as for crabs, my heart likes them, my mouth relishes them, and I can never forget them for a year and a day . . . Every year before the crab season comes, I set aside some money for the purpose and because my family says "crab is my life," I call this money "my life ransom." From the day it appears on the market to the end of the season, I have never missed it for a night . . . I used to have a maid quite devoted to attending to the care and preparation of crabs and I called her "my crab maid." Now she is gone! O crab! My life shall begin and end with thee! ²⁴⁶

In essence, to Lin Yutang, self-expressionism, humor, and the ability to enjoy life by recognizing value in the unadorned became qualities of the connoisseur of the Chinese art of living. By a happy coincidence, the American people, who might or might not actually practice the Chinese art of living, have been fascinated by Lin Yutang's view ever since.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

²⁴⁶ Lin, *The Importance of Living*, 252.

The twain of the East and the West did finally meet. The triumph of Lin Yutang's symmetrical cultural internationalism is the triumph of the Chinese non-orthodox aesthetics tradition, a tradition worthy of the "high" cultures of the world.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

I. American Response to Lin Yutang's Cultural Internationalism prior to 1939

My Country and My People and *The Importance of Living* are composed of numerous essays found in Lin Yutang's three Chinese magazines—The *Analects* (論語 *Lunyu*), *This Human World* (人間世 *Renjian shi*), and *Cosmic Wind* (宇宙風 *Yuzhou feng*). Thus, both English books and the three Chinese magazines serve as testimony to Lin's creative linkage of Chinese non-orthodox cultural traditions and Western literary and cultural ideas—Lin Yutang's brand of symmetrical cultural internationalism prior to 1939.²⁴⁷

The intrinsic factors that led to the American success of *My Country and My People*—which include objectivity, comprehensibility, readability, and boldness of wit—

²⁴⁷ Lin Yutang also published *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* in 1936 and *The Wisdom of Confucius* in 1938. However, neither one of these two books bears any relation to his cultural internationalism that links Chinese culture to Western culture. *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* was written for academia and subsequently became required reading in U.S. academia. See Yu Ying-shih, *Lishi Renwu*, 133-4. *The Wisdom of Confucius* was a translation commissioned by the Random House for The Modern Library Series of World Classics. Although Lin was compensated only \$600 for the copyright of this project, he felt it was crucial that all Chinese classics be included in the Modern Library Series of World Classics. Lin was commissioned again by Random House in 1948 for the translation of *The Wisdom of Laotse*. See Lin Taiyi, 180.

have already been mentioned in the last chapter. The extrinsic factors of its success include American curiosity about China, which was aroused by the Japanese systematic encroachment on China and U.S. political interests in the Pacific region. Furthermore, Pearl Buck's best-selling novel *The Good Earth*, a 1932 Pulitzer Prize winner, wetted the American appetite for more cultural information on China. And finally, *My Country and My People* could have easily dominated the book market on Chinese culture for two reasons: (1) there was a dire shortage of qualified American China hands who could write an authoritative book on Chinese culture in the 1930s and (2) there were no other Chinese authors who possessed Lin's lively style in writing English.

Although *My Country and My People* was incredibly successful, having gone through seven editions in four months, *The Importance of Living* represents Lin's crown achievement in America during the 1930s. Again, intrinsic and extrinsic factors account for the success of this book. The intrinsic reason for its popularity is that the individualistic and democratic notions of the late Ming art of living were not foreign to the American people. Lin Yutang was certainly aware that individualism and populism represent the two key values of modern America. In fact, Chun-shu Chang argues that late Ming values manifested many symptoms of modernity, which the invading Manchus deemed heterodox and subsequently smothered through a series of Inquisitions. The late

Ming dynasty was indeed a world of thriving commercial economy and intense urbanization, leisure and individualism, and growing literacy and increasing appreciation of literature in the vernacular.²⁴⁸ Late Ming art of living was a curious product of elite origin with modern populist sentiments. Although the ostensible individualistic and democratic taste might have been a Bourdieuan scheme for the late Ming elite to forestall class usurpation of the nouveau riche as suggested by Craig Clunas, the aesthetic content of their art of living nevertheless connotes individualism and populism. Thus, the correlation between late Ming art of living and the populist and individualist notions, which according to James Gilbert, have been and remain powerful in the democratic American culture, accounts intrinsically for the success of *The Importance of Living*.

The extrinsic factor for the success of the book was ignited by a battle of taste between the Book-of-the-Month Club (hereafter BOMC) and the highbrow in the United States.²⁴⁹ By historical and cultural coincidences, the elite-populist hybrid of the late Ming art of living greatly appealed to the upper-middlebrow sentiment of BOMC. The BOMC, founded in 1926, was not simply a successful mail-order discount bookseller

²⁴⁸ Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 344-7.

²⁴⁹ Janice A. Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-class Desire* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 45.

with enormous subscribers. The Club was also a socio-cultural institution of enormous significance—it defined and disseminated the “best” current thought of the time by selecting the titles that would be most heavily publicized, distributed, and discussed.²⁵⁰ The Club asserted its independent cultural authority by defying the highbrow criteria of good taste—esoteric, abstract, and experimental literary modernism. When Lin Yutang was informed that *The Importance of Living* was selected as the book of December 1937 by BOMC, he gave a great howl as if he had won a lottery and a *zhuangyuan* (the first place in the highest Chinese imperial examination). Indeed, the book subsequently became the number one U.S. bestseller in 1938.

According to James Gilbert, the discourses on “brows” and cultural hierarchies in the U.S. was provoked by a huge expansion of popular culture and the tripartite division of “brows” became an important nomenclature from the 1920s to 1940s.²⁵¹ The highbrow was represented by the American elite universities, who had a long tradition of emulating British and European curricula.²⁵² Harry Scherman, the Jewish-origin founder

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 188, 387.

²⁵¹ James Gilbert, “The ‘Brow’ Problem in American Culture” in *Explorations of American Culture* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 2000) For the origin of the term “brow,” see Radway, 218-9.

²⁵² Gilbert, 81; Radway, 8-10.

of BOMC, was precluded from studying the classics or English literature at the University of Pennsylvania possibly because of his non-elite and Jewish origin. Janice Radway explains that “both classics and English departments at the time were bastions of an elite Anglo-Saxonism and therefore inhospitable to all but those with the bluest blood.”²⁵³ American high culture, like that of the French in Bourdieu’s study, also constantly defined itself against the suspect pleasure of the middlebrow.²⁵⁴ Radway further hints at the agenda of Scherman’s BOMC:

Despite the traditional claim that middlebrow culture simply apes the values of high culture, it is in fact a kind of counterpractice to the high culture tastes and proclivities that have been most insistently legitimated and nurtured in academic English departments for the last fifty years or so. More than anything else, it may be a competitor to English departments for the authority to control reading and to define the nature of literary value.²⁵⁵

To posit BOMC’s as the socio-cultural alternative equal of the academic elite, Scherman tied his operation to the services of an elite group of literary “judges” so that he could imply that BOMC was also “driven by the tastes, opinions, and choices of an educated, professionalized, specialized elite.”²⁵⁶ However, BOMC judges were totally against the

²⁵³ Radway, 156.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 37.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 236.

“desiccated” and “technical” writings of academia.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, for BOMC judges, all books, including fiction, achieved greatness to the degree that they confronted the issues of everyday life rather than the issues of the avant-garde aesthetics.²⁵⁸ In addition, the judges celebrated individuality as a notion of social and cultural distinction. Just as Li Yu of the late Ming dynasty, Heywood Broun and Christopher Morley, two of the five BOMC judges, were also eager to demonstrate “to club subscribers how to combine an original literary taste with other individualized preferences for clothes, objects, food, and even opinions as a way of constructing the self.”²⁵⁹ In other words, BOMC, especially Broun and Morley, wanted to present alternative aesthetics in opposition to the avant-garde highbrow aesthetics.

Broun and Morley, whose literary taste and practice greatly resembled those of Lin Yutang, also gained fame by writing personal columns and essays that “take the public into their confidences with whimsical candor.”²⁶⁰ Apparently, the columnists’

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 278.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 182.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 180. Coincidentally, Lin Yutang also claimed that as an independent critic, he “had been developing a style, the secret of which is take your reader into confidence, a style you feel like talking to an

willingness to display an idiosyncratic individual identity in their columns was a relatively new innovation in America during the 1920s.²⁶¹ Both Broun and Morley had a propensity to display their own unique and original taste, which “was expressed not only in matters literary and cultural but also in politics, sports, food, and even clothes.” They were chosen by BOMC as specifically literary exemplars of a new and modern sensibility.²⁶² In essence, the individualistic writing style of Lin Yutang and the individualistic art of living of the late Ming Dynasty fit almost perfectly into the BOMC judges’ taste and BOMC’s modern sensibility. No wonder that BOMC singled out Lin Yutang’s *The Importance of Living* as the “best thought and current of the time” in December 1937. The club subscribers, who consisted mostly of “well-educated and economically successful individuals who happened to place a high premium on culture,” responded enthusiastically.²⁶³

old friend in your unbuttoned words. All the books I have written have this characteristics which has a charm of its own. It brings the reader closer to you.” See *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, 69.

²⁶¹ Radway, 180.

²⁶² Ibid., 180-1.

²⁶³ Ibid., 295.

II. Chinese Response to Lin Yutang's Cultural Internationalism prior to 1939

When Chan Wing-tsit, a professor of Chinese philosophy at Dartmouth College, assessed the credibility of Lin Yutang's English publications, he remarked that few interpreters of China have been so liberally praised and severely condemned at the same time as Lin has.²⁶⁴ Chan writes:

Sensitive Chinese were furious at him for exposing China's vices Chinese government officials were furious at him because he attacked them for eating the people's fat and the people's marrow Chinese Leftists were furious, too, because to them he was but a joker who tried to laugh off the cruel oppressions of the masses Many Chinese, resorting to a pun called it [*My Country and My People*] "Mai Country and Mai People"—mai being the Chinese word for selling or betraying.²⁶⁵

Chan observes that Lin's compatriots essentially overlooked all the positive aspects of Lin's portrayal of China. Chan concludes that although Lin spoke more like a Daoist philosopher than a Chinese national, he did give a well-balanced account of the Chinese culture. The overreaction of Lin's sensitive compatriots, anxious to see a dignified China being presented to the world, was understandable. After all, China had occupied a century-long humiliating political, economic, and military international position since the defeat of the Opium War.

²⁶⁴ Chan, "Lin Yutang, Critic and Interpreter," 2.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

Not only did the Chinese object to Lin's English works because they did not present China in a dignified manner, but the Chinese, especially the leftists, also objected to his cultural internationalist agenda of importing humor. No other publications in the 1930s provoked as much of the leftists' indignation as Lin's magazines. Lu Xun, leader of the League of Left-wing Writers (hereafter Left League) and the most significant writer of modern China, simply could not tolerate the subtlety and elusiveness of literary humor. Since his switch of commitment from literary revolution to revolutionary literature, Lu Xun's goal had been to construct a unified and combative culture of national resistance to imperialism and to the landlord class. Lu Xun saw no socially redeeming value in either humor or in the personal essay because neither could perform as a political weapon.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, he insisted that class distinctions could be made between those who could appreciate humor and those who could not.²⁶⁷ Therefore, Lu Xun concludes, "[Literary] humor is not a native product, nor are the Chinese people good at it; moreover, this is not a time for practicing humor. So humor is bound to change. If it does not become social satire, it degenerates into traditional joking or

²⁶⁶ Sohigian, "The Life and Times of Lin Yutang," 530.

²⁶⁷ Sohigian, "Contagion of Laughter," 151.

poking fun.”²⁶⁸ Consequently, the Left League orchestrated a series of polemical attacks on Lin’s advocacy of humor and the personal essay.

In 1933, Lu Xun wrote an essay accusing Lin of being “an independent jester who was in reality the ‘flunky, fawning protégé’ of aristocrats and the Number-Two Clown of the East Zhejiang Opera.”²⁶⁹ Lin then reciprocated with a retaliatory essay mocking leftist literary dogmatism and totalitarianism; and subsequently, seven polemical essays resulted from the accusatory exchanges between Lin Yutang and Lu Xun.²⁷⁰ Moreover, Hu Feng, Lu Xun’s close disciple, published a lengthy diatribe of 15,000 characters titled “On Lin Yutang” in *Wenxue* (文學 Literature), an official journal of the Left League.²⁷¹ The article accuses Lin of two crimes: First, Lin’s recent aesthetic interests in self-expression, leisurely enjoyment, Croce [via Spingarn], and Yuan Zhonglang constituted a regression from his progressive *Yusi* days. Second, Lin’s aesthetics was individualistic and bourgeois and therefore unsympathetic to the proletariat who was struggling to unite

²⁶⁸ Wendi Chen, 142.

²⁶⁹ Sohigian, “Contagion,” 148.

²⁷⁰ Qian, “Lin Yutang: Negotiating Modernity,” 47.

²⁷¹ Lin Taiyi, 117.

as a class to fight for the revolution.²⁷² Hu Feng even called Lin “China’s Nero, who would fiddle while the country burned, and a champion of fetishism, hedonism, and ultra-individualism.”²⁷³ Furthermore, to counter the popularity of Lin’s magazines, the Left League launched a series of three fortnightlies—*Xin Yulin* (新語林), *Taibai* (太白), and *Mangzhong* (芒種)—for a showdown.²⁷⁴ In spite of these orchestrated attacks of the Left League, Lin’s *Analects Fortnightly* and *This Human World* still ranked among the top four popular magazines in circulation, far beyond that of any literary magazine in the 1930s.²⁷⁵ In fact, Lu Xun, during an interview with Edgar Snow in 1936, had to concede that Lin Yutang, Liang Qichao, Zhou Zuoren, and Chen Duxiu represent the best modern Chinese essayists. (Lu Xun was too modest to have included himself)²⁷⁶

Despite an outburst trading of written polemics, Lin Yutang actually remained cordial with the leftist writers up until he left for the U.S. in 1936. His magazines

²⁷² Qian, 49.

²⁷³ Sohigian, “Contagion,” 148.

²⁷⁴ Lin Taiyi, 117.

²⁷⁵ Sohigian, “Contagion,” 140.

²⁷⁶ Zhang Shizhen 張世珍, *Lunyu shiqi de Lin Yutang yanjiu* (論語時期的林語堂研究 Studies on Lin Yutang of the *Lunyu* Period) (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1993), 112.

adopted a policy of inclusive pluralism, and his contributors ironically consisted some 40 leftist writers, who greatly outnumbered the right-wing writers.²⁷⁷ Even Lu Xun had contributed to *The Analects* for a year before he changed his mind. Lin attributed the reason to his being attacked by the Left League to the polarized politics of the Nationalist Party and Communist Party. Since Lin did not join either Party and did not subscribe to the literary totalitarianism of the Left League, he was singled out to be a target of constant attacks.²⁷⁸

In the end, Lu Xun turned out to be correct not in his ideology of literary totalitarianism but in his prediction of the future prospect of humor in China. As it turned out, Lin Yutang did not consistently write the leisurely humorous essays of the Gonggan school that he preached—half of his essays were tainted by biting humor. The reason might be what Lu Xun had stated: “[Literary] humor is not a native product, nor are the Chinese people good at it.” But more than likely, the real reason was that the 1930s was “not a time for practicing humor” in China. Lin was indeed busy in mocking the Nationalists and in refuting the Left League most of the time. Some scholars even

²⁷⁷ Qian, 31.

²⁷⁸ Sohigian, “The Life,” 532.

wonder if the promotion of humor was a smokescreen for Lin to make social and political commentaries.²⁷⁹ In fact, in 1936, he admitted sarcastically that Nationalist censorship had forced him to alter his writing style and turned him into a “Master of Humor.”²⁸⁰ Lin conceded that the title had stuck not because he was a first-class humorist but because he was the first to promote humor in China.²⁸¹ Wendi Chen concludes that humor in pre-1949 China meant either serious social satire or poking fun on a personal level, just as humor has always meant to the Chinese people throughout Chinese history.²⁸² Thus, the real reason for the popularity of Lin’s magazines was their biting humor—a hybrid of humor and satire—rather than pure leisurely humor.

It would be an overstatement to claim that Lin created a new style in modern Chinese literature in a span of only five years; however, it would not be an exaggeration

²⁷⁹ For example, Chen Pingyuan opines that although Lin Yutang’s essays are presentable, they do not exhibit much humor. See Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, “Lin Yutang yu dongxi wenhua,” (林語堂與東西文化 Lin Yutang and Eastern and Western Cultures) in *Zai dongxi wenhua pengzhuang zhong* (在東西文化碰撞中 On the Clash between Eastern and Western Civilizations) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 35. Zhang Shizhen itemizes all of Lin Yutang’s essays that could be categorized as either political essays or social satires. See Zhang Shizhen, 110-135.

²⁸⁰ Sohigian, “Contagion,” 151.

²⁸¹ Lin Yutang, *Memoirs*, 58.

²⁸² Wendi Chen, 154.

to assert that Lin introduced a modern literary conception of humor to the Chinese. Had the Japanese invasion and the subsequent communist takeover never occurred, Lin's cultural internationalism might have had a chance for permanent success in China. As it was, for a brief five years, "in China's silent literary scene, humor is all the rage; here's humor, there's humor—every which way you turn there's humor!"²⁸³ Although the popularity of his magazines lasted through the war with Japan, when the communists finally took over in 1949, neither satire nor humor was permitted to flourish. Fortunately, Lu Xun, a renowned satirist, died in October 1936 and missed all of Mao Zedong's subsequent anti-intellectual campaigns whereas Lin, a renowned humorist, immigrated to the U.S. in August 1936 to avoid the eventual literary totalitarianism in China. Although Chinese soil was not conducive to Lin Yutang's agenda of cultural internationalism, because of his persistence in his literary and cultural ideologies, despite fierce leftist attacks, and his well-balanced biculturality, he was able to carry out his cultural internationalism in the United States.

III. Lin Yutang's Contributions to Cultural Internationalism prior to 1939

²⁸³ Sohigian, "Contagion," 138.

In *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, Akira Iriye elucidates the concept of cultural internationalism by examining the history of international relations since the late nineteenth century not as a story of interstate affairs but as a story of intercultural affairs—“cross-national activities by individuals and groups of people, not always or primarily as representatives of governments but as agents for movements transcending national entities.”²⁸⁴ Iriye’s main focus is on the history of cultural internationalism and therefore only lightly touches upon the asymmetrical nature of cultural internationalism in the 20th century.

My thesis highlights the reality of the two existent models of cultural internationalism—symmetrical and asymmetrical. The asymmetrical model—a one-way movement of cultural import—is reserved for the non-Western world whereas the symmetrical model—a two-way movement of cultural exchange—is reserved, previous to Lin Yutang, for the intra-Western world. My thesis shows how Lin Yutang, a member of the non-Western Third World, was able to gain entree into the arena of symmetrical cultural internationalism by presenting Chinese culture as a worthy culture for cultural exchange. Prior to the entree of Lin Yutang and his publications, China did not possess a respectable platform to circulate cultural knowledge to mass readership in the West.

²⁸⁴ Iriye, 1.

I then trace the intellectual origins and methodology of Lin's unique practice of symmetrical cultural internationalism to the legacy of a New Culture reform paradigm that champions the reconstruction of Chinese culture by linking the common ground between non-Confucian elements of Chinese culture with modern Western ideas. By singling the late Ming Gong'an prose, banned by the Confucian Qing emperor, as the proto Western humorous and expressionist personal essay, Lin identified the link between Chinese literary modernity and Western literary modernity. For his contribution to the reconstruction of Chinese culture based on a Western model, Lin relentlessly promoted the late Ming prose writing tradition. In addition, Lin also identified the two notions of the elite-origin Ming art of living—individualism and populism—as the key sensibilities of the modern world. His instinct for the modern cultural trend in the 1930s found a perfect match in America, where the revolt of the middlebrow, who espoused a more populist taste over the exclusionary highbrow taste, had begun a decade ago. Thus, the genius of Lin Yutang's symmetrical cultural internationalism lay in his creative linkage of Chinese and Western genres, styles, and theories that are suitable for the modern world.

For all his ingenuity and achievements, Lin did not win the Nobel Prize in Literature even though his novel, *Moment in Peking*, was nominated for the Prize in

1975. Instead, in 2000, the Prize went to Gao Xingjian, a Chinese mainlander-in-exile, who won the Prize mainly for his novel *Soul Mountain* (靈山 *Lingshan*). The novel is a fictionalized account of the travels that Gao Xingjian made to Qiang, Miao, and Yi ethnic-minority areas, where shamanistic customs are still being practiced. It is not my intention here to judge whether Gao deserves the Nobel Prize or not, I just want to point out that Gao, unlike Lin Yutang, completely skipped the task of linking these minority traditions to the Western world. This is totally understandable since Gao did not intend to cultivate the role of a cultural internationalist when he wrote the novel. I wish only to emphasize that by merely exhibiting literary artistry or exoticism without performing the linkage task between cultures, a Nobel-winning novel might not always be a suitable instrument for cultural internationalism.

Lin Yutang's presentation of Chinese image deviates dramatically from the shamanistic culture of Gao's novel or the stereotypical Chinese image in America in the 1920s and 1930s, manifested by the two popular fictional characters—Fu Manchu—the evil Chinese man who dreamed of ruling America, and Charlie Chan—the inscrutable Chinese buffoon-detective. Through Lin Yutang, mainstream Chinese cultural knowledge was circulated widely and appreciated by mass readership in the US for

almost 30 years. In 1935, *New York Times* critic R. Emmet Kennedy described the impact of *My Country and My People* in the following manner:

However inclined one may be to regard the Chinese as strange, peculiar, fantastic, or impossible, for no other reason than that one has never been fortunate enough to gain their friendly and intimate acquaintance, the reading of Mr. Lin's book will very soon dissipate any notion of uncertainty and assure one of the truths of the Confucian statement, that "Within the four seas all men are brothers."²⁸⁵

Lin would have much preferred Kennedy's sincere response for his effort in cultural internationalism over the award of the Nobel Prize.

It would be highly unrealistic to expect that Lin single-handedly influenced American culture through his publications when Chinese culture, unlike Western culture, has historically made an impact only in the East Asian and Southeast Asian regions. While Lin would have liked Chinese aesthetics to exercise a greater influence in the West, just as modern Western ideas have influenced the Chinese culture, he was very realistic about the current cultural standing between the two civilizations. In 1975, after a half-century-long of endeavors in cultural internationalism, he gave the following assessment:

. . . . This is the central theme of the essay, the impact of the western civilization on China, from the cultural ways of thinking to the industrial and technical problems confronting her. It will be a series of adjustments and rethinking of the whole problem, but the burden will be rethinking on

²⁸⁵ R. Emmet Kennedy, "The East Speaks to the West," December 8, 1935.

the Chinese part, since it will be shown, China is the debtor nation in the cultural interchange. The process will not end today.²⁸⁶

Nevertheless, it is almost certain that Lin's cultural internationalism has contributed to the cosmopolitanization of America when politics in China forbade his contribution to the creation of a cosmopolitan China that values cultural pluralism. For Lin's books even moved one American reader to view Chinatown from a new perspective. After reading

The Importance of Living, Peter S. Prescott, another *New York Times* critic, writes:

After reading his [Lin Yutang's] book, I feel as if I want to run to Chinatown and make a deep bow to every single Chinese whom I come across.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Lin Yutang, *Memoirs*, 21.

²⁸⁷ Quoted in Lin Taiyi, 176.

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